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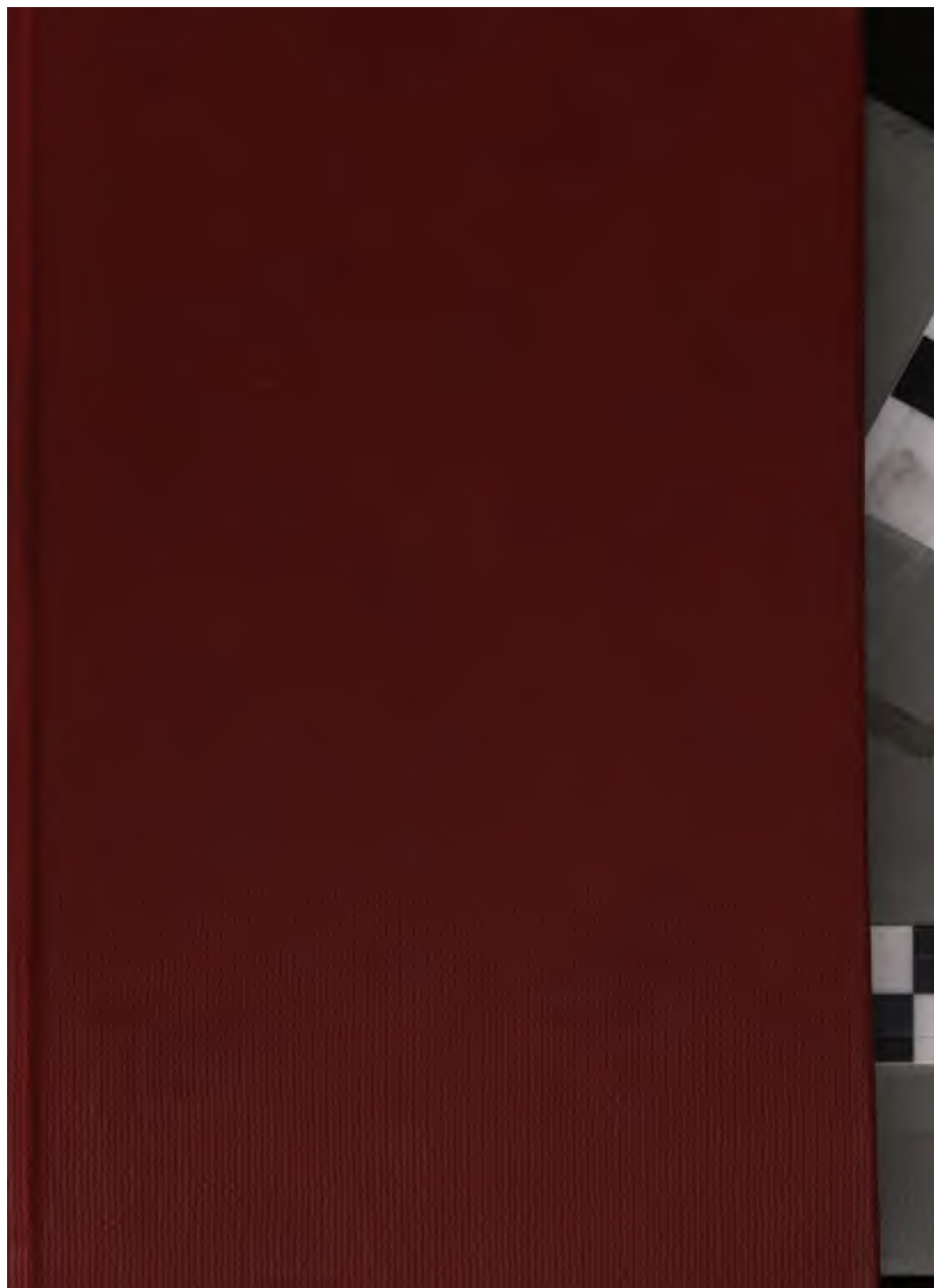
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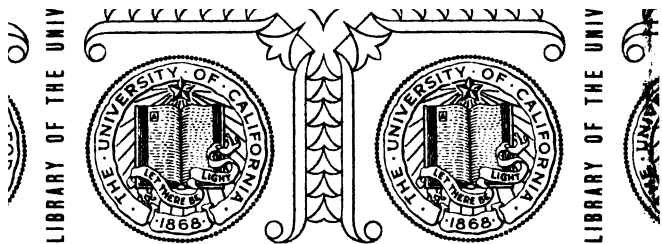
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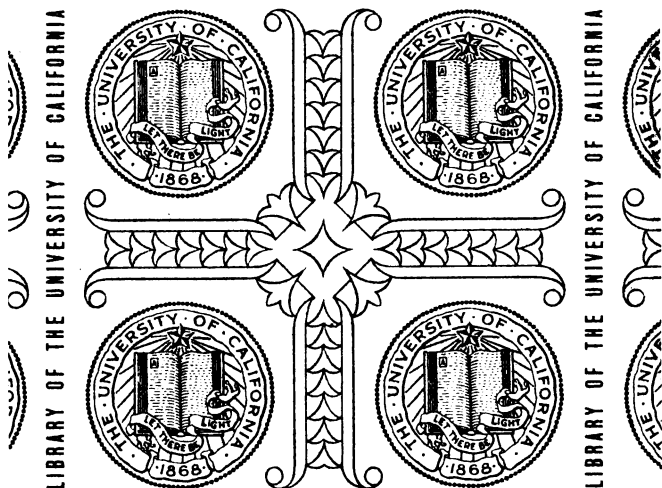
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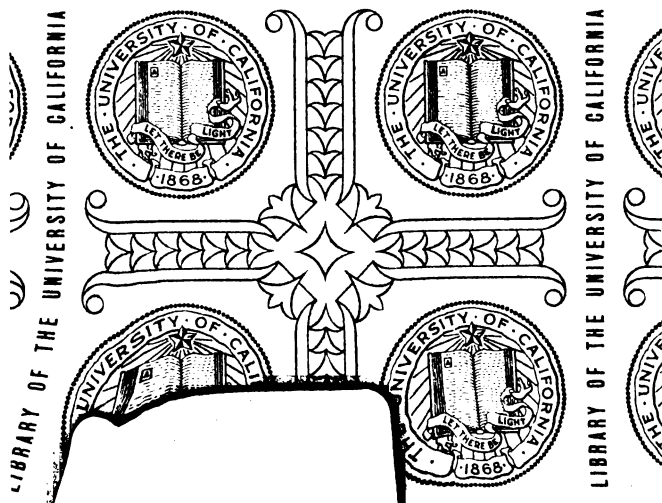


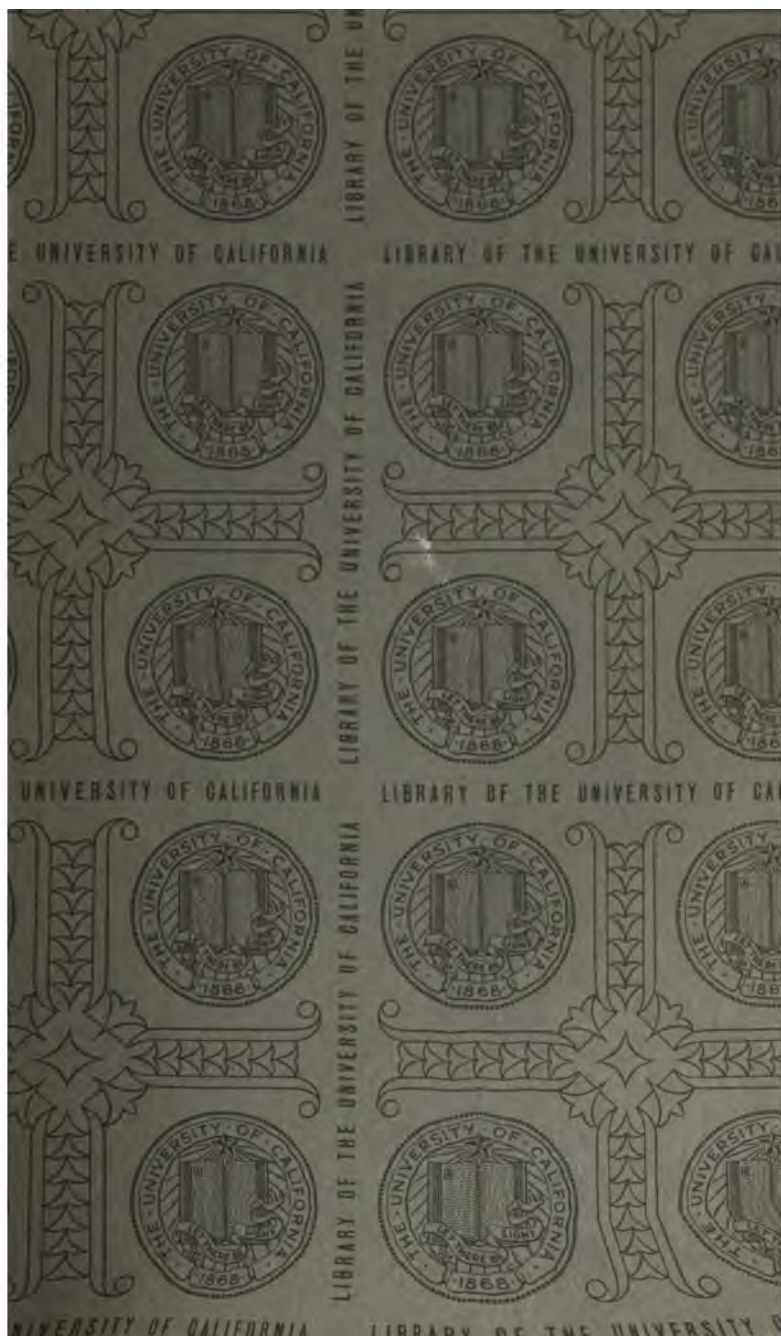


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*"The proud buck with his large prong  
horns had claimed her for his own"*

*Many Hunted  
Tells*

Wild Animals of the Plains as  
I Knew Them

*by Kirk L. Bell*

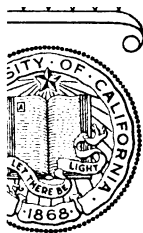
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*With Illustrations by  
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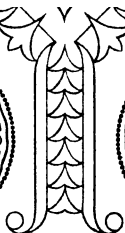
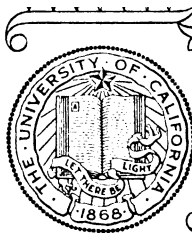


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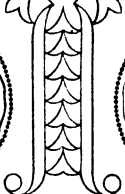
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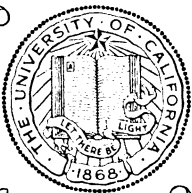
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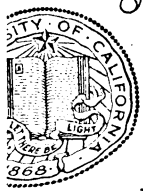
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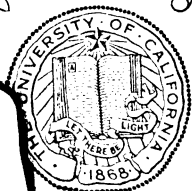
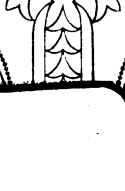
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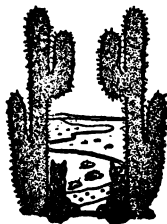
# *Along Four-Footed Trails*

Wild Animals of the Plains as  
I Knew Them

*by Ruth A. Cook*

*Formerly Assistant in charge of Nature Work at the  
Children's Museum of the Brooklyn Institute  
of Arts and Sciences*

—  
*With Illustrations by  
Mabel Williamson*



New York  
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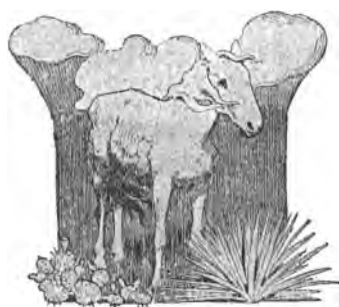












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## PRELIMINARY WORDS

**T**HE facts of nature are not limited by geographical boundaries; their interpretation is not the property of any cult. The East and the West grade into each so insensibly that the Occident is reached ere one has removed the Orient's dust from his feet. The birds, the beasts, the plants appear to have much in common, and really do have, unless one compares the extremes. So the traveler from Massachusetts and Ohio will see much that is familiar in Nebraska or Dakota as he is whirled along in comfort and pleasure.

It was not always thus. Earlier, in my girlhood days, animals were daily, even hourly, seen that are now almost things of the past—rare and little known. They first were seen from the doors of our “dugout,” that rude sort of sod-house, half cave, half house, which in these later days has been replaced by palatial homes. They became familiar objects to the little western girl who had no playmates save those which

## PRELIMINARY WORDS

nature furnished her. More than familiarity grew out of our relationship. I learned to love those curious, or queer, or cunning animals; and with that love came a measure of sympathy which still survives. They were often my sole companions—save my thoughts—in long rides over treeless, rolling plains. I gathered a certain sort of information as to their ways, their lives, their enemies, their dangers. In the following sketches, in as simple a way as possible, I have sought to record facts and impressions—albeit they have a certain human tinge to them—that grew on me as the years passed on and I became a woman. They are offered you, my reader, in the sincere hope that hours thus made bright to me may still find a work that makes for betterment in the lives of others.

Acknowledgment is due to several friends and is heartily rendered for valuable services freely given. To Dr. R. Ellsworth Call, A.M., M.Sc., Ph.D., Curator of the Children's Museum, and to Miss Mabel Williamson, whose illustrations have sympathetically caught the spirit of my stories, special thanks are tendered.

R. A. C.

*Brooklyn, New York, June 10, 1903.*



## BRUNO, MY PET COYOTE

I'VE got 'em, Lawrence! Jolly, there's two more! Ain't you got her most skinned? Keep your gun ready! Her mate is liable to come back any minnit." These were the words of a neighbor boy that rang out on the clear, light atmosphere of the plains and greeted my ears, a quarter of a mile away, while riding my pony over the divide. My dog was trotting along behind to see if the cows had strayed from their usual feeding-ground.

I headed my pony in the direction whence the boys' voices came. In a short time I had ridden down the cañon's side and they were in full view. They had found a coyote's den containing three little pups. Lawrence, the elder brother, had killed the female coyote and skinned her, while his brother took charge of

## ALONG FOUR-FOOTED TRAILS

the litter. He was about to strike the last one when I begged him not to kill the little woolly thing but to give it to me. Lawrence said he would carry it home for me if his brother would carry the mother's pelt. With my arms and apron full of flowers I slid forward on the shoulders and neck of my pony and invited the boys to ride with me. Lawrence, with the pup under his arm, mounted first, then his brother, with the pelt thrown over his back, climbed up behind; and the pony, with his three passengers, started homeward on a slow trot through the cañon and over the divide.

On arrival, the boys helped me to dig a hole in the side of a small mound of dirt and in it we placed a wooden shoe-box. In its side they cut a hole for an entrance and the lidless top was turned downward. This allowed the pup to dig under her wooden home, if she chose. We found a broad, thick strap to serve as a collar and a steel chain. With these the pup was securely fastened, named Bruno and introduced to her new home.

Bruno was nearly a foot long, with a straight bushy tail and an abundance of thick, brownish,

## BRUNO, MY PET COYOTE

red hair, which covered her loose skin. She had a head like a fox. Her nose was sharp-pointed and her eyes were yellow, bordered with black eyelids.

She was very shy at first and remained in her house, half covered with dirt, for hours at a time, without ever noticing me or the food I placed in front of her kennel for her. When I would try to pull her out by the chain she would growl and snap at me. In a short time, however, she learned to know that I loved her, for animals know as well as human beings when they are truly loved. It was not long before she would come out of her kennel and jump and pull at her chain as soon as she heard my voice or noticed my footsteps.

The State was paying two cents each for gophers' pelts. I owned six steel traps, purchased with money I had earned the year before, selling radishes, onions, and bouquets of wild flowers to people in the hotel of the county seat, a small town some six miles away. I set these traps at night, baited with corn and placed them in the great cornfields around our home. In the morning I found three dead gophers, two



## ALONG FOUR-FOOTED TRAILS

traps sprung, and one trap with the bait still on it. I skinned the three gophers and the bounty they represented was six cents more toward the purchase of my winter shoes, with enough breakfast for Bruno and my dog. Bruno was fed with milk, scraps from the table and grasshoppers, as well as the bodies of the trapped gophers, but the fresh, wild meat she seemed to enjoy most.

There was plenty of rain that summer and no hot winds or grasshopper plague; the farmers prospered and all wild animals found abundant food. Bruno grew large and was very tame. One day my mother noticed some feathers around the coyote's kennel and told me she feared Bruno was killing her hens, since two were missing; so we watched.

One day, late in August, mother and I were sitting behind the plum thicket, near our house, from which point of vantage we could see the coyote but were not seen by her. My mother was telling me of some scenes of her own childhood when our attention was drawn to Bruno. She was pulling at her chain, scratching and drawing something towards her with her front

## BRUNO, MY PET COYOTE

paws. Investigation showed that when I fed my pony some ears of corn for his dinner some kernels had dropped from the cobs into the dirt and these the coyote was trying to collect. I was sure that my pet was not hungry enough to eat such food, so we watched silently to discover what she intended to do. And this is what we saw : After she had scattered the kernels about her and some near the entrance to the kennel, she lay down and shut her eyes as though asleep. A number of chickens were strutting about, finding here and there a dainty kernel of corn, but they seemed wary and for some time did not venture near ; finding, however that the reddish brown object did not move one old hen ventured closer and closer, picking up the grains of corn, until she reached the entrance of the kennel, when quicker than a flash the coyote sprang upon her and in a moment the hen was torn to pieces and nearly devoured. What had become of our lost chickens was now quite clear and mother declared the coyote must be killed. I begged her not to be so angry with poor Bruno, for did not we love a well cooked chicken? Why then should we

## ALONG FOUR-FOOTED TRAILS

blame the poor brute? After much coaxing, plentifully mingled with tears, it was agreed that Bruno should be spared if her kennel was placed farther away from the hen-house. Consequently it was moved about forty rods.

At night, in the fall months, Bruno heard the coyotes howling in the distance; she, too, began to howl at sunset and at intervals during the night. Our nearest neighbor, who did not appreciate these nightly concerts, finally declared that he would shoot the wolf if my father did not. But Bruno lived on all unconscious of these threats and sang her nightly song as before.

One cold night in November, I shall never forget it, I awoke at the sharp report of a gun, followed by three loud yelps, then two muffled ones from the direction of Bruno's kennel. I knew my pet had been shot and I feared that she was dead. I was so angry at our neighbor that I could not sleep. I thought of all the spiteful things I should do and say when I grew older. I thought for the present that I could forget to bring his cow and her calf home with the rest; that would make him trouble even if the wolves



*"One old hen ventured closer and closer . . . when quicker than a flash the coyote sprang upon her"*



## BRUNO, MY PET COYOTE

did not get the calf. Then, precious memory, there came to my mind the wise counsels of my mother. I remembered how she told me that I would hurt myself most by letting bitter thoughts enter my mind, that they would determine so much of my life as to affect my character. Then I looked out of the little window at the clear blue sky sprinkled with stars where the bright light of a full moon did not hide them, and kinder thoughts came into my heart. I forgave the man and breathed a prayer that my poor coyote might not die. Then I shut my eyes, believing my prayer would be answered and fell into a sweet sleep.

Early in the following morning I ran down the hill to the kennel of poor Bruno. At the sound of my footsteps on the frozen ground she came out of her kennel. She was alive! but she walked on three feet and her right hind leg was all covered with blood. I patted her neck and talked to her while she laid her head on my arm; when I bent over her, she whined, reached up her head to my face and licked my cheek in the most eloquent way. How I loved her! More than all my other animal pets, for

## ALONG FOUR-FOOTED TRAILS

I felt that she and her wild relatives were friendless and despised. I examined the wound which the cruel bullets had made, tenderly washed and dressed it and left the result to nature. In a few weeks she was well, but the muscles of her leg had been so badly torn that she limped for the remainder of her life.

One evening, just at sunset, I noticed a large coyote on a hill half a mile away. While I watched him he raised his long, pointed nose towards the heavens and howled as only a coyote can howl. Then he sneaked a little nearer between the bunch-grass tufts, stopped, sat down in wolf fashion and looked down at my Bruno. At the first sound of his voice she raised her pointed ears and the long hairs of her loose shaggy mane stood straight out. She limped towards him to the limit of her chain. Seemingly in deep thought she stood for a minute or two, looked up the hill at the stranger, raised her head and howled. The stranger coyote then crept closer and howled again. This was repeated several times until I put an end to their courtship by shutting Bruno in her kennel for the night as had been my cus-



*“She limped toward him  
to the limit of her chain”*





## BRUNO, MY PET COYOTE

tom since she had been shot. The big prairie wolf sneaked away with his ears hanging down like fringed pointed flaps and his tail drawn in between his legs. In this way he would trot a few rods at a time, squat on his lean haunches, lift up his ears, look back and again repeat this performance until he reached the summit of the hill. Then he gave one long, continuous howl, dismal in its length and cadence, and disappeared. He was a very large coyote, with a long, lean body, short appearing legs, straight bushy tail, loose skin covered with long tawny brown hair, with an occasional white or black one, and under parts a dirty white. His ears stood up straight and pointed when on the alert and his bright yellow eyes looked like two coals of fire after dark. His manner was sneaking but determined. Such was the appearance and character of the stranger wolf which came night after night to court gentle, lame, little Bruno.

The third night the stranger made bold to come down the hill, jump over the cornstalk fence which the boys had helped me to build around Bruno's kennel and, wagging his tail in a most friendly manner, walked up to Bruno

## ALONG FOUR-FOOTED TRAILS

and touched her nose with his. This was their introduction. Then they talked to each other in wolf language, by little low barks and whines, as well as by touch and smell. This was repeated night after night for nearly three weeks but seemed to have been only a preparation for another episode. One evening in early March the strange coyote sneaked through the grass and over the fence earlier than usual. Finding Bruno, he gnawed the strap from her neck and led her away, unchained and free. The sun had just sunk down below the western horizon, leaving a deep and beautiful red border, which tinted the whole heaven where earth and sky seemed to meet. It was while enjoying this beautiful sunset that I had noticed the large coyote trotting up the hill with my little Bruno limping along close by his side. I ran to the kennel; there was the chain and the torn strap. My little coyote was gone. She had left of her own free will to enter upon the wild life for which she was intended. Perhaps she would be happier with a mate. I loved her and would be lonesome without her but should she be happier I would be content. I was aroused

## BRUNO, MY PET COYOTE

from my thoughts when they both howled a farewell from the summit of the hill. The beautiful red reflection in the heavens seemed to wave a triumphant welcome to the little coyote as she gave a short, quick bark, followed by several others in rapid succession and ending in a long, continuous howl. Her mate did the same. Then they both howled together. That ringing, penetrating howl, not altogether musical, echoed and re-echoed from hilltop to hilltop, until it seemed to me there must have been at least five hundred coyotes rejoicing together at the liberty and love of one little cripple, instead of only the two singing their evening love-song.

Some months passed. I gave up the thought of ever seeing my pet coyote again. One afternoon, however, while tramping over the prairie to a neighbor's to exchange a setting of eggs for my mother, I noticed down near the cañon a coyote galloping along with a curious limp which I recognized as Bruno's. I placed my basket of eggs beside a bunch of Buffalo grass and ran up the hill to a point where I could see the country for a long distance around to learn, if possible, where the new home of my former pet

## ALONG FOUR-FOOTED TRAILS

might be and to discover what she was after. But a few rods ahead of her I saw a jack-rabbit making tremendous leaps in the hope of escaping his most dreaded enemy, for the coyotes and the jack-rabbits have been at eternal enmity ever since nature put them together on the western plains. As Bruno neared a clump of sage-brush, I saw her mate, the great coyote, was waiting to relieve her. He sprang forward with long leaps in pursuit of the unfortunate rabbit. Bruno stopped, sat on her haunches and rested. It was not long before the coyote had headed the rabbit and turned it back towards his mate. Bruno was now ready to take up the chase anew. In a few leaps she sprang upon the tired beast, grasped its neck in her sharp teeth and thus held in a deadly grasp the family dinner for that day. With the big coyote by her side she limped proudly to a hole in the hillside. Here was her home. Unnoticed, I lay on the ground, the direction of the wind favoring my complete secretion, for these animals find food and discover their enemies largely by the sense of smell. When Bruno neared the entrance of the den three pups came out,

## BRUNO, MY PET COYOTE

sprang at the rabbit, jerked it unceremoniously from the mother's mouth and with furious snarls and many growls tore it to pieces. The parent coyotes lay quietly in the warm sunshine and proudly watched them. After this, having discovered the home of my pet, I often carried gophers in my traps and dropped their bodies near the coyote's den where I was sure they would be found.

The summer wore on ; the fields were green and so beautiful. The farmers were hopeful of another prosperous year. All unexpectedly there came a hot wind and sand-storm. In a few hours the green fields of corn, the grass, and the very plants of the prairie itself were brown and withered by the scorching wind. The tame cattle as well as the wild vegetable-feeding animals were deprived of much of their fall and winter food. The severe winter set in early. On the morning of the 16th of November a characteristic snowstorm came ; the white flakes fell thick and fast all that day and night. In the morning it was clear, calm and cold ! The whole earth was covered with a mantle of white which sparkled in the bright sunshine like count-

## ALONG FOUR-FOOTED TRAILS

less millions of mimic diamonds. By noon the gray clouds rolled up in front of the sun ; a cold northwest wind swept through the cañon and over the divide, carrying great masses of the loose, newly fallen snow before it. One could scarcely see a yard's distance. The storm raged long, then calmed, only to rage again. This continued for three days and nights. Many cattle and wild animals perish of cold and hunger from these storms. When the three days' storm had spent its fury, how beautiful it all seemed ! It was clear and cold, a full moon bathed the earth with a silver light and one could see almost as well as by day. In the comfort of the warm fire of my home I sat and thought. Of course, I thought of Bruno. How many times I had laid my head against her shaggy mane and told her of my childish troubles—as though she could understand and sympathize with me ! Hark ! Was I dreaming ? Surely that was a coyote's bark ! It was a long way off and yet again and again I heard it ; it came nearer and still nearer. I left the fire and went to the window. Down the hill were coming two coyotes, a large one and a

## BRUNO, MY PET COYOTE

small one. They reached the spot where Bruno's kennel had been and stopped. They smelt of the posts which stood where the boys had helped me to build the cornstalk fence. The larger coyote rubbed against the posts while the smaller one limped a few feet away, raised her head and howled. It was Bruno, my dear pet Bruno! Hunger had driven her and her mate back to her old home where she had always had abundance of food. I now had a new occupation, a new problem. I must feed the poor beasts, but how? Mother said we should not feed them because there were many poor people who would need all we could possibly spare. Indeed, we had little for ourselves. I pressed my face against the cold window-pane and watched Bruno as she limped closer and closer to the house, with her mate sneaking behind her. She looked so thin and hungry. I could think of nothing but my love for the poor brute and her extremity! I suddenly seized a piece of bacon which hung on a hook near the window, opened the door and threw it to the coyotes. Then turning to my angry parents I said between sobs, "I will not eat any meat for a



## ALONG FOUR-FOOTED TRAILS

whole week. I have given my portion to the coyotes!"

Late in the spring one of our cows came home without her calf, heated, excited and with blood on her horns. The coyotes had killed a number of calves in the neighborhood and ours had probably met the same fate. And now the farmers took a hand in the affair and poisoned meat was placed along the coyote trails over the prairie. A few days later I was riding my pony over the hill when I saw a coyote struggling on the ground with froth at her mouth. It was Bruno. She was dying from arsenical poisoning. I leaped from my pony just as she died. A stray stone was rolled close to her and some cornstalks were gathered and placed over her. Then mounting my pony again I rode quickly to impart the news of Bruno's death to Lawrence and to get his assistance in skinning her.

Twelve years passed. I had my pets during that period, but none ever took the place of Bruno. I then lived in a large western city. Often at night, when tired from the day's work, I would throw myself on the library floor and with the dear old coyote's skin for my pillow

## BRUNO, MY PET COYOTE

would fall asleep and dream of the old days on the prairie. I heard again the howl of the coyote, the prairie chicken drum for his mate and the echo from hill to hill, like the noise of a distant cannon.

I lived again the old, wild, care-free days of youth, only to wake with a start and to realize that it was all a dream. That I must read over the pile of business letters and see nothing but rows and rows of brick and mortar. How different it all was from the great stretches of green prairie, the wide breadth of horizon, the panorama of clouds, the merry whistle of the western winds, the songs of birds, even if they were only conjured up in dreams.

## PRONG-HORNS

**J**UST at daybreak one beautiful morning in the latter part of May, I rode over a divide, headed for a nearby cañon, in search of our cattle that had strayed away during the night. The bright stars paled and the new moon was lost to view. The reflection of the sun against the clear blue sky tinted the east with gorgeous reds and purples, long before it rose above the hills in the distance.

I had been riding along slowly for some time, on my return home, when my pony pricked up his ears and my dog was all attention, as distant repeated reports of a gun rolled across the prairie through the clear atmosphere. Presently there appeared on the ridge a mile away a number of antelope flashing the white patches on their rumps so that they glistened in the

## PRONG-HORNS

sunlight like bright pieces of tin. On a knoll a half mile distant appeared a man on horseback. In a moment the antelope were joined by several others who came from the direction in which the man was riding. One of the new-comers had left her companions and was headed toward the elevation from which I was watching them. The hunter did not notice her as she leaped over the rolling prairie, leaving the slight hill upon which her frightened companions stood pawing the earth between herself and her enemy. The remainder of the herd turned their heads in the direction of the hunter and snorted. Then they fairly flew over the prairie as they ran off at top speed. One took the lead and the others followed in single file.

The hunter galloped across the divide, keeping out of sight of the antelope as much as possible. He knew the animals would be loath to leave the straight course they had decided upon in order to reach a more open and favored stretch of the prairie. If he could intercept them by taking a shorter route he was quite certain of bagging at least one.

The lone doe came on and on with great leaps;

## ALONG FOUR-FOOTED TRAILS

her long, slender legs scarcely seemed to touch the earth as she bounded forward with lightness, speed and a regular gait. The frenzied animal passed within a few feet of me but did not seem to notice my presence. As she drew near I could see her great black eyes, large open nostrils, and little horns raised up a few inches from her head in front of two pointed ears covered with hair. I was struck with awe and pity as I noticed her thin panting sides and the blood trickling from her right shoulder. I knew the hunter had mortally wounded the beautiful animal, as I could see she was rapidly losing her speed and strength.

The small herd of antelope and the hunter disappeared together behind a slight elevation on the prairie shortly after the poor wounded doe dropped on the ground in a little hollow, just back from the entrance to the cañon and a short distance from a spring that helped to feed the nearby stream.

Only female antelope and perchance the young of the previous season are found in company at this time of year. The does leave their lordly masters in March or early April and seek quiet,

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secluded places for their young. Each buck goes off to some out of the way place for the purpose of shedding his horns. The family consists of one or two fawns, usually two, which are born in the latter part of May or the first of June. No true sportsman or honest thinking person will ever kill a doe at this time of year.

I turned my pony in the direction of the doe and rode slowly to the spot where she lay. Near her, partly covered with the long overhanging grass, were two fawns of a uniform dun color. They were so near the color of their surroundings that one could scarcely see them as they lay with their legs doubled up under them and their necks stretched out with their heads flat on the ground. As I dismounted the mother looked up at me and in her large black eyes was a pleading expression that was almost human. She tried to get upon her feet but was too weak. I took one of the fawns in my arms. He was scarcely as large as a jack-rabbit. I held him close and stroked his coarse hair and felt of the two small bumps on his head caused by the undeveloped horns that in a few months

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would break through the skin. The frightened mother turned her head and followed every move I made with her great mournful eyes. Her body and limbs trembled and tears rolled down her cheeks. My heart ached for the poor suffering creature. Not wishing unnecessarily to distress his suffering mother, I placed the dear little fawn on the ground again. How I longed to make the poor dying doe understand I was a friend and would not harm her or her little ones. But, alas, how could she know? Was it not a human being that for the mere thoughtless sport of taking animal life had brought her to death's door? And perchance many times in the past she had been shot at and driven for miles and miles over the prairie. Had she not seen many of her companions drop in the chase, never to join the herd? Had she not heard that same harsh sound of the gun ring across the prairie this very morning as one of her companions leaped high in the air, ran a few paces and then fell? At the same time as she sprang forward a second report rang out and something struck her shoulder and pierced her lungs. How she ran with frenzied madness as the sharp pain

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repeatedly shot through her shoulder. She had but one thought — that of reaching her beloved and unprotected little ones. And here at the very last was another of these strange human beings holding her defenceless children and she was unable to protect or defend them.

It seemed as if I could read all these thoughts and many more as I stood with tears rolling down my own cheeks, looking into the moist eyes of the doe. I stood in silent sympathy and thought. Would the day ever come when human beings would learn to love, protect and appreciate the real value of every living creature? Would man ever learn to live with mother nature so as truly to understand her simple but powerful laws of love, economy and evolution? Would all the world in time be governed by it in harmony and peace? I could but do my little part and hope. As I stood thus in meditation the fawns raised themselves upon their weak, uncertain legs and staggered to their mother's side. She looked at her little ones as they approached and then at me. I walked toward the spring and left her with her own. I tried to carry water from the spring in



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my sunbonnet, in hope of reviving the dying animal by moistening her mouth. My effort was in vain; when I returned the antelope was dead.

The little fawns could not understand. One of them licked her mother's face while the other knelt on his knees and rooted about his mother's side in search of his breakfast. After some time, however, the little fawns receiving no response from their lifeless mother lay down flat on the grass beside her. Now that the antelope's suffering was over, I remembered the mission upon which I was sent. I rounded up the cattle that were now feeding on the meadow below and started them homeward. Before leaving I bent over the little fawns and promised myself to come back for them and endeavor to raise them as pets.

Several hours later when I returned I was greatly surprised as I looked from the hilltop to find a strange doe acting as foster mother to the motherless fawns. She stood perfectly still but a short distance from their lifeless mother. The two little ones with partly bended knees were taking their morning meal apparently in

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perfect contentment. As I had not been observed by the antelope I concealed myself and watched. After the fawns had fed for some time their foster-mother led them away to a sheltered spot further down the stream. She licked their coats as they stumbled along in front of her. Presently they lay down but a few feet from the bank. The doe stood and watched them for a while and then sprang forward and ran some distance over the prairie where she joined several others that were browsing upon the short grass. About noon two Omaha Indians chanced to be passing that way and carried away the dead animal to their temporary camp.

I was much interested in the little fawns and their foster-mother. I decided not to take them home, for I knew they would fare better and have more chance to live in their natural haunts and under the loving care of their foster-mother. Perhaps she had lost her own little ones. Many are killed by wolves and other wild animals of the plains in the first few days of life while they are entirely helpless and depend upon escaping the notice of enemies by lying flat on the ground

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where the surroundings are near their own color.

Toward night the doe returned to the fawns and gave them their supper. Thus she fed them for several days, leading them farther away each time. I would conceal myself some distance from the fawns and lay in wait for the mother-doe to come and nurse her children. One morning I was surprised to see her lead them along the divide. I watched them with thrilling interest as I lay on the ground in the grass on a high elevation that commanded a good view for some distance in all directions.

The fawns ran beside their devoted foster-mother at a surprisingly rapid gait. Their weak legs of but a few days past were now strong and steady. I was certain of knowing the doe if I should have the good fortune to meet her again at close range. Her right ear was split and a piece torn off. I could imagine a fight with her deadly foe, the coyote, in which he had torn the flap off her ear as she bravely defended her little ones from his cruel jaws.

During all this time I lay conjuring up this tragedy until I was sure it could have happened

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in no other way. The graceful doe and beautiful fawns leaped over the divide and joined a small band of antelope that frequented the plains for miles around. The grass had been burned late in the fall and, in consequence, early the following spring it had sprung up thick, with juicy, tender blades, making this strip of prairie a very attractive feeding ground for the prong-horns.

During the next week I noticed footprints of the antelope down by the spring and decided that the "wingless birds of the plains," as they are sometimes called, were using the pool near the spring for a drinking place. Early the following morning I concealed myself behind a willow tree in the hope of again seeing the little fawns and the doe with the injured ear.

I was finally repaid by seeing the head of the doe appear over the hill and by her side were the two little fawns. The doe stopped on the top of the hill, raised her head and looked around. Seeing nothing that seemed strange or harmful she came down the hill against the wind with the fawns and drank from the pool only a few feet away from where I sat. Antelope are accustomed to go to water against the

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wind in order to scent enemies. When the doe I was observing had finished drinking she turned her head in my direction. Just a moment before I had stood up with my head at an opening in the branches of the willow tree. Thus she looked straight at me with her large, mild, black eyes bordered with long, heavy eye-lashes. What thrilling moments of pleasure and excitement! Face to face with and looking directly into the eyes of one of the fleetest and most graceful wild animals of the prairie! The wind was coming in my direction and I stood like a statue without moving a muscle, hardly daring to breathe and with a free wild feeling that I have never experienced before or since. There we stood looking at each other in mute silence. I drinking inspiration derived from her grand, wild life, and she trying to discover whether I was a part of the tree, as she could see but little of me through the numerous shoots and branches thickly covered with leaves. Presently she lowered her head and began browsing grass near by but still facing me and keeping the fawns behind her. I continued to stand perfectly still until they gradually left me.

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After this I watched them many times during the summer as they drank from the pool and often saw them at a distance feeding upon the prairie in company with others of their kind.

One day in September before the rutting season began, the doe and fawns came to drink as usual. While feeding near the stream the doe was disturbed by hearing the alarm of a rattlesnake. Directly in front of her, coiled up ready to spring at one of the fawns, was a large rattler giving his signal of danger. Instantly the doe raised her front feet, sprang forward and came down on the snake with all her weight. She then proceeded to paw and cut it into pieces with her sharp pointed hoofs. After this she raised her head, dilated her nostrils, gave a loud snort, sprang forward and ran up the hill with the two fawns close at her heels.

A few weeks later I one day noticed a coyote skulking along in front of me and off to my left was another circling around the hill at a fast gait. I knew they were after some other animal, one intending to attack it from the front and the other from the rear. As I reached the top of the knoll I could see in a ravine a doe feeding and

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near by were two fawns frisking about in the noonday sun. Presently she raised her head and saw the approaching coyotes. She snorted and pawed the earth in alarm. I stopped and awaited developments. As the coyote in front approached her she stood between him and the fawns. The coyote circled around and tried to get behind her but the doe turned when he did and always managed to face the wolf and thrust her body between the attacking forces and her little ones. When he sprang at her she struck him vigorously with her fore feet and sent him rolling over and over just as his cowardly companion came up from the rear. In an instant the fearless antelope wheeled around and charged at the new comer with her short but sharp horns, sending him back with a howl of pain. Soon the coyotes recovered from the encounter and sat on their haunches some distance from the doe and much coveted fawns. The doe continued to snort and flash the white spot on her rump. The wolves walked around, showed their teeth and snarled only to sit down again and lick their jaws in hungry anticipation. Thus they continued for some time. The doe, brave

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and fearless in her determination to protect herself and the fawns, kept them at bay while the cowardly coyotes were no less determined on securing their noonday meal. The coyotes were getting desperate. One rushed at the fawns from the rear while the other tried to claim all the attention of the doe by attacking her with snarls and growls from the front. She was too quick for them. With a tremendous blow from her fore legs she cut a gash in the head of one coyote, as she sent him rolling and howling with pain. In an instant she turned and struck at the other coyote, knocking him senseless just as he sprang at the neck of one of the fawns. I saw there was danger that the doe would be overpowered, so I sent my pony on a long gallop forward and drove the coyotes away. The antelope stood for a moment and looked at me. It was the same doe with the damaged ear and the fawns that had grown to be a part of my life! Presently they took to their heels and joined the herd from which they had become separated, leaving more than two miles between us. I followed at a distance and watched the coyotes who also followed and joined several other wolves



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which hung around but a short distance from the herd waiting for one to become separated from the others, or to be left behind by sickness or accident. Around the outskirts of prong-horn herds are generally to be found a number of hungry coyotes, waiting to devour any unfortunate one which may chance to fall in their power.

The bucks were now gathering the does and their young into large bands for mutual protection during the winter. Many a hard battle was fought between opposing prong-horn males in the endeavor of one to lead away the does coveted by the other. The fighting consists in one buck locking horns with the other and then pushing head to head as hard as possible. The one who succeeds in pushing with most force sends his beaten rival away with a farewell punch in his side or rump. The victor gains the ownership of the disputed does and proceeds to drive them along with the rest of his band.

A large prong-horn buck is nearly five feet in length and three feet high at the shoulders, carrying a pair of horns nearly a foot in length and curved upward and inward, having a short triangular prong with a blunt point, which

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branches off about two-thirds from the end, from which the animal received its name. Below, the horn is very broad and flat, but above it the horn runs to a sharp point and is curved inward. These animals being great fighters, nature has provided them with horns that turn inward to prevent them from mortally wounding one another during the rutting season. The buck's body is covered with long hair of light yellowish color; it is thick, coarse and stiff, somewhat crinkled and quite brittle. Upon the neck during the winter season is carried a thick, coarse mane nearly six inches long. This is shed in the following spring leaving but a black streak of short hairs. A white band about two inches in breadth partly encircles the throat and beneath this is a brown band of the same breadth. The under parts are white. On each side of the rump is a patch of white hair considerably longer than that covering the remainder of the body. These hairs when raised flash in the sunlight and stand out in all directions like the petals of a chrysanthemum; at the same time a pleasant musk odor is thrown out upon the air from glands situated at the base of the hairs.

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One day, late in October, I noticed a noble male specimen whose description has just been given. He pawed the earth, snorted and ran up and down the prairie for a quarter of a mile or more. Presently two does and three fawns drew his attention; he ran after them and drove them in my direction. They passed within a few yards of me. There beside a large strange doe was the faithful little one with the torn ear and close behind her were the two adopted fawns. The proud buck with his large "prong-horns" had claimed her for his own. On and on they went, joining others, as the strong buck fought his battles and gathered many a doe into his wild harem. They were on their way to the cañon to spend the winter, sheltered from the cold winds and driving snow of the flat lands.

That was the last time I saw the little doe and the fawns that I had long since begun to call my own. I have always been glad that the sweet memory of that morning's pleasure was not marred by the realization of this fact as I saw the graceful animals with the noble buck disappear from my view in the distance.

## SAM DEMPSTER AND THE PRAIRIE-DOG TOWN

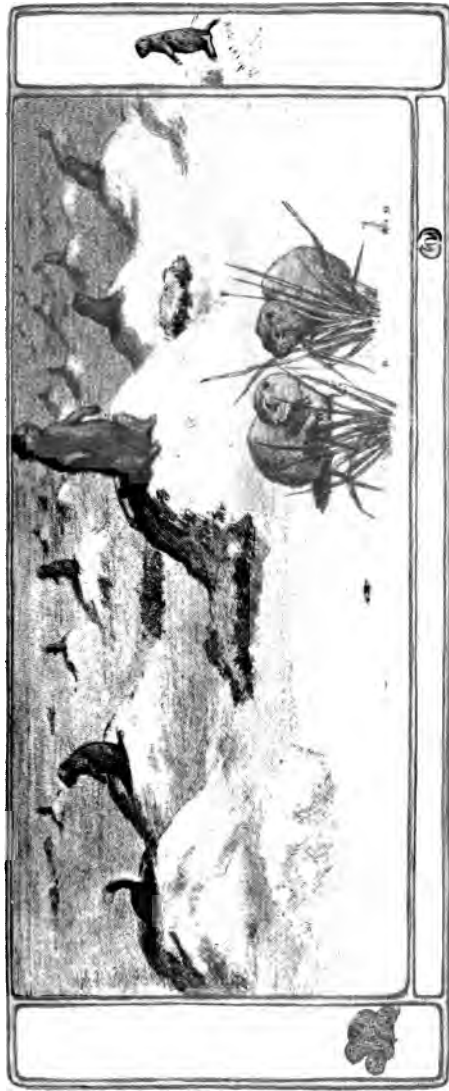
**S**AM DEMPSTER was a lone bachelor, a tall, quiet man, who made it a practice to mind his own business and to see that everyone else did the same in so far as he was personally concerned. He always wore his pants well tucked into his high-topped boots. A flannel shirt, with a buckskin coat when needed, and a slouch hat which shaded his full-bearded face completed his costume.

He was one of the first settlers of the county. Just when he came, or from where, no one seemed to know. He owned a homestead which was looked upon as being one of the best quarter-sections of land in that part of the state.

Adjoining his farm, down near the hay land, was a small prairie-dog town. They were sociable little brutes, among themselves, and

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somehow they seemed to touch a sympathetic chord in Sam's nature. He could be seen almost any evening before sundown, sauntering with long, deliberate strides down the hill from his dugout and across the meadows to the homes of these little animals. When Sam first began paying his visits to the prairie-dog town the little creatures were very suspicious of him. The "Mayor," as Sam called the largest of the prairie-dogs, was generally to be seen sitting upon the hillock that stood on the highest elevation of the town. He seemed to be on guard as he sat and peered in all directions with his large brown eyes. If he discovered any suspicious looking object in the distance he would instantly give a shrill, sharp little bark of alarm. It was from this peculiar short yelp that these pretty little creatures received their name and not from any relationship they hold to the dog-family. They are cousins to their neighbors, the ground-squirrels. When the Mayor uttered his bark of alarm, every prairie-dog that was out in the town rushed madly for his home where he mounted the hillock of dirt and sat bolt upright in front of the hole,



*"The 'Mayor' . . . was generally to be seen  
sitting upon the largest hillock in the town"*



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with his fore paws folded downward, looking soberly but curiously in the direction of the intruder. If the object that had drawn the Mayor's attention continued to move the dogs would keep up an incessant barking, accompanying each bark with a quick jerk of their bodies and short tails until the disturbing object was out of sight. But if it chanced to draw near they would all spring into their holes, leaving nothing but the little mounds of dirt with the well trodden paths between them to mark the place that but a moment before was alive with noise, curiosity and excitement.

As Sam drew near the town on his first visit the excitement and fear was so great that each animal fairly turned a somersault as it pitched forward into its underground home. In a few minutes, however, the curiosity that characterizes these animals forced one of the nerviest of them to stick his head out quickly and look around. When he saw Sam standing within a short distance of him he darted into his hole again, quicker than a flash of lightning. Sam was interested. This was something new in his life. He hid behind a clump of weeds and



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waited. Presently the little fellow ventured to look again, but only for a moment, when he dropped back out of sight to gain confidence after which he repeated his venture. This time he was bolder and stuck his head further out and, not seeing the unwelcome guest who had disturbed them, he raised his head a little higher from the hillock, then cautiously pulled out his whole body and sat straight up as before. After looking for some time to make sure there was no enemy he uttered several call barks. One of his near neighbors answered him by sticking its head out of a neighboring hillock and looking around. On being assured that all was safe the little animal came out and ran along the well worn paths of the town. At different burrows he would stop, sit up, and, with a queer little jerk of his body and tail, bark for his neighbors to come and join him. This brought the Mayor out on his hillock of observation. The animal, accompanied by two others whom he had lately called from their homes, ran to the Mayor's hillock and talked to him in prairie-dog language, by little barks and yelps. The first dog who, in his friendly little way, had

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been informing his companions that danger was passed, stepped forward and spoke to the Mayor first, as though apologizing for the liberty he had taken without his consent. The other dogs joined him in a most earnest business-like manner, as though consulting upon important business as to their government or the safety of the inmates of their neat and seemingly well regulated town. While Sam lay concealed behind the clump of weeds he allowed his imagination to transform every act of the intelligent, quick, little creatures into human thoughts. It was this first evening that he named the big dog Mayor—and those who gathered around him he called “the council,” and fancied them holding a town meeting, and as each barked more excitedly than the other he was certain they were having a political discussion on the tariff or some other subject that political parties always keep upon the shelf for an emergency.

Over in the opposite direction from this sober gathering, behind a new hillock on the very edge of the village, were two little dogs caressing each other and rolling Indian apples to one

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another before eating them. Presently the larger one secured a dainty stem of the plant and handed it to his companion who took it in her paw with a bow of her head in the most human-like way; she then sat up holding the stem daintily in one paw until all was eaten. Sam became very much interested in this bit of love-making and moved slightly in order to see more clearly. The sharp eyes of the Mayor saw him and with one commanding bark from himself and several from those who seemingly sat in council on the near-by hillocks, they sent the dogs hurrying along the many avenues and streets of the town from which they had assembled and tumbling into their holes, they left the town apparently uninhabited. It was some time before there was a move in the village, and the old Mayor was the first to take a cautious view of the surrounding country.

The heavy dew began to fall as the sun sank in the west. Sam felt damp and chilly so he arose and left his only near neighbors and made his way back across the meadow to his lonely dugout.

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As the settlers were few and far from one another, the prairie-dogs were not a nuisance in those days to the western farmer. Nature, as usual in natural conditions, balanced herself and the prairie dog was kept in check while acting as a manufacturing establishment to turn vegetable matter into flesh for the benefit of his carnivorous neighbors.

During the second summer of Sam's frontier life the crops were a failure, as they often were in those days before the planting of trees, which has done so much for the plains in changing the climate, breaking the winds, retaining the snow and ridding the country of the grasshopper pest.

Many a plains settler felt the pangs of hunger more than once during the dry fall and long winter that followed. Early one morning Sam noticed the sky was not clear and the sun was not as bright as usual. There was a hazy atmosphere through which the sky looked gray and the sun appeared as a dull red ball. This continued for two days, the air growing hotter and more dense with smoke; not the least breeze stirred. Sam learned from the stage-driver at the Crossroads that a great western prairie fire

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was sweeping over the plains from Texas northward, and that it would be well for him to "back fire" if he wished to save his life and belongings ("traps" or "outfit" as the westerner expresses it). Great herds of buffalo, wild ponies and other animals of the plains rushed in frantic stampedes for the rivers and mountainous districts before the mad, wild flames. Once overtaken by the fire there would have been left but a lifeless, charred object to tell the cruel story. Such has been the fate of many an unfortunate man as well as animal, surprised and overtaken by the relentless flames, fed by the long slough grass, the thick bunch or buffalo grass and great tumble-weeds which often carry the fires across a stream more than half a mile wide, setting the flames loose on the opposite side. Sam took the hint given him by the stage-driver and set fire to the grass around his home, after breaking a "fire line" to prevent his own fire from getting beyond control and destroying that which he was endeavoring to save. When the main fire came, within half an hour, it swept by leaving the prairie, as far as one could see, a black, desolate waste.

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Sam continued to visit the prairie-dog town during the two years he lived near it. After a time the little dwellers lost their fear of him and a number of them were on very friendly terms with him. When he came near they would gather around for the food he never failed to carry in his pockets for them.

After the prairie fire had wiped away all their food but the underground roots the little animals, forced by hunger, became more and more friendly with Sam. One of the young dogs even went so far as to crawl into his pocket and help himself to the food and a number were bold enough to come and eat from his hand.

Even wild animal food was very scarce in consequence of the widespread prairie fires and the settlers welcomed the flesh of the little prairie dog, which in the young is really very tender and good. One day while Sam was making his customary visit to his four-footed and most intimate friends he noticed a stranger crawling behind some old prairie-dog hillocks with a gun in his hand. Before Sam could stop him he had shot one of the little fellows in a path and another in front of his hillock. While

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picking up the one in the path, one of the dogs watched the stranger while another pulled the body of his dead comrade into the hole beyond the reach of the hunter. It is very difficult to secure a prairie-dog even if you hit it, for they either wriggle into their holes before death or are pulled in by one of their companions afterwards. The usually successful way is to lie concealed and wait until one leaves his hillock, then if hit it is possible to secure him.

Sam was both grieved and angry at the stranger for he had become very much attached to the little brutes and felt it a personal injury to have one of them molested. The farmer told him of a sick wife and child and that he had been tramping all day in hope of finding nourishing food. Sam helped him in the true, generous, western spirit and the seeming injury was forgotten.

One cold wet day Sam found a couple of young dogs away from their burrow in search of food; they were hungry and numb with cold. He put them underneath his coat and carried them home. Under his tender care they revived and grew very tame and fat; they would

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sit upon his knee and bark for food or to attract his attention if he were reading. Sometimes they would go to sleep in his big coat pocket or jump from his lap to the table and take food from his plate, especially carrots or potatoes, as they were very partial to these two vegetables either raw or cooked. They would hold the food in their paws, sit bolt upright and watch him curiously while they ate it. In this way they helped Sam to while away the long winter months, when, for days at a time, he was unable to leave the house because of the severe weather. In the following spring they dug a home for themselves back of his dugout and raised their own little family. Prairie-dogs have from three to four little ones in a litter and often there are three litters in a year.

The settlement of the plains by the white man was both a protection and a benefit to these little vegetable consumers. His coming killed off their four-footed enemies and they increased in numbers until they themselves became a nuisance, destroying hay-land and putting horses and cattle in danger of breaking their legs by stumbling into their deserted burrows. Man



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has in consequence been obliged to do the work nature did before he interfered. The plains farmer now finds it necessary to do all in his power to prevent the increase of the prairie dogs.

Sam often took his two little pets with him to visit their old home and relatives ; but they were always carried back to his own home and his companionship.

Before and after a storm Sam particularly enjoyed watching the little animals of the town, which included one hundred or more inhabitants. They would come out in a most business-like manner when a storm threatened, inspect the little mounds of dirt, which are usually from two to three feet in diameter and two feet high. If one found the least defect he would throw up the dirt with masterly skill and great energy, then run along in company with a neighbor to the next burrow. When all was completed they would sit upon their respective hillocks and look as though watching the threatening storm-cloud. After the storm had spent its fury they were the first animals to be up and at work repairing any damage. In a short time the town would

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be put in perfect condition and its inmates ready to eat, be sociable and merry.

These little vegetable-feeding animals of the plains not only eat the green portion of the grass and other prairie plants but the roots as well. After a time, when all the food is consumed around their burrows, they desert them and extend their village by digging new underground houses and making new streets. It is not uncommon to find a prairie-dog town covering from five to ten acres of land, or even more. The centre of the town is generally barren of animals. The deserted holes as a rule are occupied by the little burrowing owls. There were a number of these queer little owls in the town adjoining Sam's farm, two of which he captured and kept in a wooden cage placed over some soft dirt in which the little feathered fellows dug a home. Sam fed them on mice, pieces of meat and insects. There was one owl who had a habit of standing on top of a deserted prairie-dog hillock, blinking its eyes in the sunlight and gravely bowing at Sam whenever he happened to see him.

There were many rattlesnakes in the vicinity

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of the dog-village, for they are very fond of young prairie-dogs as well as the eggs and the young of the burrowing owl. They are always to be found near these homes. Sam saved the rattles of this honorable snake of the plains, who always gives considerate warning of its presence and its intention to strike. He had over a dozen good-sized rattles on a string the sight of which would have made any Indian maiden envious. One warm afternoon in July Sam with a string of rattles in his hand stood on the edge of the village. He had just killed a large rattlesnake and had finished adding the rattle to his collection when he noticed a white speck in the distance. As it grew nearer he saw it was a canvas covered wagon locally called a "prairie schooner," drawn by two thin, hidebound Indian ponies. Sam's thoughts wandered back to the time when he had left civilization and traveled across the barren plains to the place he now called home and the free, wild life he had learned to love so dearly. Weeks often passed without his seeing a single white man's face. The covered wagon coming in his direction started all kinds of thoughts in his mind. Could it be an

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eastern man? One who could tell him of home, the latest books, or other topics. Had he a wife or daughter? The thought of seeing one of the gentler sex from his own social rank caused a blush to spread over his bronzed face and far into his hair. It had been three years since Sam had seen a white woman. The little prairie-dogs were all attention as the wagon drew near and Sam thought of their happy, social lives and compared it with his own hermit existence. Why was it his thoughts went back to his college chum? How they had unfortunately both loved the same girl! There was a misunderstanding between himself and the young lady. She had married his chum. Sam looked up as the wagon stopped. The delicate features of a sad-faced woman peered out from under a calico sunbonnet and by her side sat a chubby little girl of three summers. The little girl admired the string of bluish rattles and made friends at once with Sam by begging permission to just hold them. Sam helped the tired travelers to his dugout to rest and refresh themselves and the horses with a good meal and a cool drink. The water was most welcome for they had been travel-

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ing over a long stretch of barren waste, where the intense heat and dazzling whiteness of the alkaline beds had almost choked and blinded them.

The woman told Sam she was bound for the fort, where she hoped to find protection and aid to get back to her home in the east; her husband had been taken sick on the road and had died. She was obliged to bury him on the plains with the help of a settler, who had sheltered them on the last night her husband was alive. They both were changed; time, clothes and circumstances had entirely altered their appearance, but there had been no change in Sam's heart. The woman was his late chum's wife! As they talked the little girl climbed upon his knee and as she slipped the string of rattles around her neck and with the other hand stroked his bearded face she said, "you know you seem like my own dear papa."

The two prairie-dogs barked at the little girl as she took their accustomed place and snapped at her dress to pull her away; she only laughed! The covered wagon never moved on. The occupants had found both love and protection on the farm near the prairie-dog town.

## WHITE-JACK AND HER COMPANIONS

**I**T was the first meeting of the Jack-Rabbit Hunting Club. The district school-teacher who had organized it was the first to arrive. She was a typical western girl, twenty years of age, full of life and love of nature. Her chief thought next to her school was to bring the people of the district to a higher and closer social standing and to teach them to love the beautiful things of life just as she did.

When the prairie was turned into cultivated fields the jack-rabbits, attracted by the farmer's crops, were drawn from their natural haunts and food. In localities where they gathered in sufficient numbers they did immense damage each year to the timber, grain and corn. The young trees on many a timber claim were killed by the "prairie mules," as the rabbits were sometimes

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called because of their great, mule-like ears. If the prairie hare, or jack-rabbit of the plains, as it is better known, is not killed in some other way than by its natural enemies, it becomes a source of great annoyance and of loss to the farmer. For this reason it became a popular as well as a beneficial sport to hunt and kill jack-rabbits. The young people organized hunting-clubs and went out for a hunt every pleasant Saturday, and sometimes of an evening when the moon was full and there was snow on the ground.

The morning selected for the first meeting of our District Club was the first Saturday in November. The farmers had finished husking their corn, so the boys and girls were now at liberty to spend Saturdays in company with their teacher in recreation and pleasure. The cold, bracing air sent the blood tingling through the teacher's veins, giving her cheeks a ruddy glow as, in waiting for the company to assemble, she sat on her beautiful black mare with a rifle slung over her shoulder by a strap.

Among the first to arrive were the singing-teacher and his wife; then came the boys and girls of the school, with now and then a young

## WHITE-JACK AND COMPANIONS

farmer and his sweetheart. They came from all directions, over the hills or up the ravines, toward the school-house. Each waved a greeting to the popular and much-loved teacher as they caught sight of her in the distance, dressed in a steel-gray velvet riding-habit.

By eight o'clock all had arrived. The greyhounds and other dogs, twelve in all, were called together by their masters. The course to be pursued was decided upon. Then the entire party of thirty mounted hunters, some carrying fire-arms and the others supplied with heavy sticks or big black-snake whips, started across the prairie, the teacher in the lead.

The first mile was passed without seeing a single jack-rabbit. The hunters and dogs then scattered over some half mile of level prairie covered with low bunch-grass in the hope of scaring up the "jacks." The white-tailed jack-rabbit is the vagabond of the plains, never having any real home. He squats beneath a bush, tuft of grass, or clump of weeds, which serve for food as well as his only home. In sunshine or in rain, in cold or in heat, there he sits, always on the alert for danger, with no other protection



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from his enemies or against the weather for himself or little ones.

As the hunters rode on, one of the hounds struck the fresh trail of a jack-rabbit, and with his nose to the ground ran in the direction of a large tuft of grass. There, beside a tuft of withered grass but a few rods in front of us, was a yellowish-gray object that looked like a clump of the clay soil. When the dog was within a few feet of this suspicious looking object it took a great leap into the air and bounded off. "A jack! a jack!! hurrah! hurrah!!" rang from the excited voices of a dozen young people at the same time. Then the sport began. The jack-rabbit with his body lengthened, his long ears erect and his legs stiffly extended, fairly flew over the prairie as he sprang forward with astonishingly long leaps, barely seeming to touch the ground with his toes. The dogs took up the chase, running swiftly and barking loudly. The horses seemed to enjoy the excitement quite as much as their riders as they galloped over the prairie in pursuit of the "flying" jack.

One of the horses ridden by a half-breed Indian girl shied as a jack-rabbit sprang up in

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front of him. The rider called for her dog and started on the rabbit's trail, shouting at the top of her voice, "That's my jack!" One or two of the party had joined her in the pursuit, but now turned aside when she claimed the chase. In a moment she was joined by one of her school-mate admirers, a lean, lank fellow wearing a slouch hat and riding a yellow bronco. Away they went shouting and urging their horses to greater speed and encouraging the dog, the rabbit meanwhile keeping his distance with his long ears and little white tail bobbing up and down with each leap. Thus the excited, happy young couple were separated from the main party on their first chase. Soon another, and then another jack sprang up from its "form" amidst the main party, and the hunt grew more and more exciting. The hunters separated into small groups as each entered the chase for the jack that sprang up nearest him. On and on they rode leaping over cocks of old hay or bunches of corn-fodder that chanced to stand in the field.

The girls and boys shouted with delight as the first rabbit that entered the chase was caught

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by the dogs. When the singing-teacher reached the spot he struck the captured rabbit over the head with a stick and then threw the first trophy of the hunt over his shoulder. As he did this a frightened jack sprang up from beside a low bunch of cactus, at the same moment the singing-teacher's horse struck out on a gallop in pursuit, and man and horse once more entered an exciting race for another jack. There were now six jack-rabbits in the race for life. The hunters were scattered over the prairie, and the air was made merry with their shouts and laughter mingled with the barking of the dogs that echoed and reechoed through the ravines and over the hills. The one supreme object of each hunter was to secure the greatest number of rabbits during the day, and, by so doing, gain the honor of leading the first chase on the next hunt.

As they neared the sage-brush region the rabbits became more numerous. In spite of all the noise, they would often depend upon their protective coloration for safety, until the horses would almost tread upon them. Then overcome by fear they would spring up so close to

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the hunter that they were often struck down with a stick or a "black-snake whip."

The second jack in the hunt was a brave, long-winded fellow, who doubled back on his trail and gave his pursuers a hard run, but in half an hour the girl and her companion again joined the party. As she approached she proudly held a jack-rabbit at arm's length for the admiration of her companions. When weighed it tipped the scale at fourteen pounds, being the largest rabbit any of the party had ever seen in that region, the average weight of the prairie jack-rabbit being from seven to eleven pounds. I shall never forget the picture of the French and Indian girl, flushed and excited from the chase. She sat astride the saddle; her woollen hood held by its string from the saddle-horn; her long, straight, black hair loosened and blowing freely in the wind. The boys and girls were wildly shouting and cheering her for the large catch when she rose in her saddle and threw the limp and lifeless animal to her companion, saying, "He shot it, I didn't," but her companion coloring, threw it back again declaring the honor was all hers. With the

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great jack securely fastened to her saddle-horn, the chase was renewed. In a short time she added the second and then a third to her number, carrying them over her shoulder securely tied with a stout cord.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when, tired and hungry, with forty-two jack-rabbits to our credit, we headed our horses homeward, riding in little groups, some singing and others talking over the fun and the many laughable things that had happened. The French and Indian girl proudly took the lead with six jack-rabbits on her string. She not only won the honor of the day, but had caught the largest jack ever seen in that region. The school-teacher and the girl's lean, lank admirer of the first chase, having each four rabbits apiece, rode on either side of the newly made "queen of the hunt," and several of her less favored school-boy friends rode as near as they could, passing their crude country compliments, or singing some song in hope of receiving a smile or even a glance from this honored belle of the plains. They stopped at the teacher's home, where some of the rabbits were cooked for their dinner, the

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remainder being given to the poor people of the district.

As the winter advanced the weekly jack-rabbit hunts continued. One large jack left the prairie where she was continually being chased by the coyotes or the hunters with dogs. She chose for her home a near-by farmyard with a small plum-thicket that had imprisoned a large number of tumble-weeds carried thither by the wind. Under this she would squat in comparative safety. There was another and chief attraction on account of which the rabbit selected this particular place for her home. The only dog on the farm was an old shepherd dog that cared nothing for the sport of chasing rabbits.

In winter, in the northern part of their range, the jack-rabbits' fur turns a pure white, but in the southern portion, where I knew them, there is seldom any noticeable change in color the year round. The jack-rabbit that took up her home beneath the plum-thicket, was an exception to the rule. Her coat was plentifully sprinkled with white hairs, from the middle of November until the first of April when most

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white hairs disappeared. This made her rather conspicuous as she leaped over the snowless fields or in the yard close to the barn in search of food. In this way she came to be known as "White-Jack."

All during the long winter months White-Jack led a solitary life, always on the alert, and ready to bound off at the least suspicious sound. Her hearing was very keen, that being one of the rabbit's chief means of protection. She kept close to her "form" under the plum-thicket and never ventured more than a quarter of a mile, unless chased by some unfriendly neighborhood dog.

It had been very cold for nearly a week; the wind swept the snow and loose soil across the prairie in one direction and then changed its course and swept it back again. The lone rabbit had eaten all the tender shoots and bark from the plum bushes. Cold and hungry she crept from the bare hiding-place known as her home and leaped in the direction of the barnyard. The hens had been fed indoors on account of the storm. So poor White-Jack was not to secure her supper where she had

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often found a bountiful meal of kernels of wheat and corn. She looked everywhere about the yard and then leaped away as the old shepherd dog appeared at the barn door. She knew of some sage-brush and bunch-grass that stood over the hill, whither she went in the hope of appeasing her hunger. A coyote chanced to be looking for his supper at the same time and he too knew of the sage-brush and bunch-grass. He did not want a meal of this sort, but he knew that the rabbits did; so he was prowling about in hope of surprising some unfortunate jack-rabbit at his feast and thus securing his own evening repast. White-Jack leaped on, full of hope, but all unconscious of the lurking danger. Her leaps became shorter and the springs made by her stiffened legs grew weaker. Presently she squatted in her tracks on her haunches with a jerk to look and listen, before venturing to partake of the much coveted food that was but a few feet in front of her. There she sat with one fore foot placed a little before the other and her ears pointed in opposite directions; her large eyes had a wild stare and her whiskers stood straight out. There



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was the food, but for the moment the hunted, defenceless animal, always on the alert, feared to trust herself to eat it. The wolf, concealed behind some large tufts of bunch-grass, saw her and crept slowly behind her against the wind, showing his teeth and licking his jaws as he thought of his expected supper. White-Jack all unconscious of her most dreaded enemy overcame her fear, moved forward and began to eat, but never ceased to listen and watch. The coyote drew nearer and with one leap sprang at White-Jack before she had scarcely begun to enjoy the much needed food. White-Jack, warned just in time by her alert senses, instantly sprang forward with a great leap, entirely clearing the sage-brush and leaving some twenty feet between herself and the now furious coyote. On and on with a wildly beating heart the frightened White-Jack leaped across the prairie toward the friendly barn-yard. In close pursuit came the hungry, disappointed coyote. White-Jack could see the fierce yellow eyes and wide open mouth of the coyote as he sprang at her in the sage-brush and the memory seemed to add new



*"The coyote drew nearer and with one leap sprang at White-Jack"*



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strength to her stiffened muscles as she jumped with greater and still greater leaps. The coyote continued to follow as the rabbit entered the barnyard and found shelter under the brush pile. The trembling hare crouched low and peered out from between the brush with a frightened, hunted expression in her wild eyes.

The faithful old dog, with his mane bristled with anger, took up the chase which was now turned upon the much despised and hated coyote. White-Jack from her safe retreat watched the dog and coyote as they stopped to fight. Presently the coyote took to his heels ; with his tail between his legs and uttering sharp yelps he galloped away. The dog barked angrily as he followed driving the cowardly enemy off his domain. When they disappeared over the hill White-Jack crept out from under her temporary shelter and made off for her home. She was tired and still hungry but safe once more from the jaws of her deadly enemy, the coyote.

A farmer who was taking some shelled corn to the mill met with an accident to his wagon and some of the loose corn was scattered along the ground. Toward evening it was noticed

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that some twenty-five or thirty white-tailed jack-rabbits were feeding upon the corn that was accidentally spilt by the farmer in the morning. They seemed to take turns jumping about on the snow and eating corn while others remained on the alert and watched. If one came too near the other gave him a kick with one of his long hind legs or a bite at his great ears. Jack-rabbits as a rule are solitary animals. It is seldom that more than two or three are ever seen together.

The hot winds of the previous fall had destroyed much of the vegetation and the jack-rabbits had suffered in consequence along with other wild vegetable-feeding animals of the plains. Thus hunger had driven them to be sociable at least once in their lives.

In the spring a strange jack-rabbit visited the vicinity that White-Jack had silently claimed as her own. They were often seen in company and once were seen together in her home beneath the plum-thicket. It was late in May. White-Jack's fur was now of a yellowish color. She had not been seen about for several days. On investigation it was found there were three little

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rabbits in the "form," which consisted of grass being well trodden down and some of the mother's fur scattered about. Upon the bed or "form," as the rabbit's home is called, lay three little jacks with their eyes wide open. Their long ears were laid back against their heads and their bodies were covered with fine, thick, silky hair. Shortly after this, in the evening, while White-Jack was nursing her little ones, she noticed a fox prowling around the field a short distance away. She knew it would only be a matter of time, if this sly enemy remained, when he would discover the whereabouts of her young; so she told them in her own rabbit language that there was an enemy near. They ceased nursing and crawled among the dead leaves and lay perfectly quiet. Thus it was very difficult to observe them. The mother then left them under nature's care and leaped across the field to entice the fox to a chase and by so doing lead him away from her unprotected home and family. The chase was a long, hard one, but at last brave White-Jack, long since accustomed to being hunted for her life, evaded the sly fox and returned to her home tired but unharmed.

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One bright moonlight night the following week the unpleasant odor of a skunk was noticeable in the yard. The next morning but two of the young rabbits were left to tell the story. Skunks are very fond of young rabbits and kill numbers of them. Shortly after this a red-shouldered hawk sailed around over the yard greatly alarming the barn fowls, but it was not for the farmer's chickens his sharp eyes were peering down at this time. Out in the open beside a piece of sod almost the same color as the animal, sat a trembling little rabbit humped and motionless, instinctively trusting to protective coloration. But the hawk saw it and knew that it was not a part of the sod, but a dainty morsel which she desired. In a moment she swooped down with her graceful wings upon the gentle, inexperienced little rabbit and bore it away through the air. The farmer placed a box-trap for the other one, caught it and undertook to tame it; but as soon as the rabbit was large enough it cleared a four-foot enclosure in which it was confined and made off across the prairie to take chances of life with its natural freedom. A new dog came to live at the farm and made

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it so uncomfortable for White Jack that she was now seldom seen. After the first fall of snow, four partly white rabbit's paws and a little tuft of a tail were found and the snow was spattered with blood and marked by the tracks of a wolf. Could it be that White Jack had at last met her death by the often evaded coyote? The story in the snow read that way.



## WILD PONIES OF THE PLAINS

**T**WO cowboys and a half-breed Indian were stopping for the winter at the "Lone-Tree Ranch." They spent most of their spare time in watching and following the wild ponies that roamed over the rolling prairies of the neighborhood. There were thirty-five or more of these proud, wild animals in the band; some were sorrel, others bay, and still others yellow and iron-gray. They were led by a gray stallion with a beautiful mane that blew before the breeze in wild confusion; and his long tail majestically swept the ground. By his side was usually to be seen a beautiful black mare. She was the largest pony in the band and was of Oregon breed, a taller and finer horse than the ordinary wild pony. The mare was well built, having straight shoul-

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ders, long, slender legs, bright, intelligent eyes, a sharp nose and large, wide nostrils. A thick, heavy mane fell gracefully over her arched neck. The only other conspicuous member of the band was a little, vicious, white pony who followed along in the rear in a lazy, indifferent manner. His coat was shaggy and rough and mane and tail were short and straggling.

To the west and south of "Lone-Tree Ranch" the country was rolling and hilly; to the east along the old river-bottom were beds of thick, white sand; and to the north was a long, barren stretch of alkali waste, dotted here and there with springs of caustic water. The only "stream of pure water" for miles around ran along the foot of the hills west of the village. It was from these hills that the villagers and near-by ranchmen admired the beautiful mare as she ascended the long incline to drink in company with the gray stallion, followed by the rest of the band.

During the open fall and winter the ponies were often seen in the distance, first from one knoll, then from another, as they grazed upon the dry grass or cantered about in play. When

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grazing on the hillside or in the ravine, with the black mare beside him, the stallion often ran to the top of the hill and would stand with his proud head held high and scan the prairie in every direction. Finding nothing to occasion alarm, the two would paw the ground, bite at one another and run about kicking up their heels in a most playful manner. Then they would descend the hill together and again join the band.

The "boys," as the younger of the two young men and the half-breed Indian stopping at the Lone-Tree Ranch were familiarly known, were bent on catching the stallion and his beautiful companion. Many unsuccessful attempts had been made by cowboys and others to capture these two much coveted animals. A number of the inferior ponies of the band who were not so fleet of foot had been lassoed at different times. But the proud stallion and black mare always escaped, leaving their pursuers far behind; perchance one or two of the less favored companions would be captured and subdued. The wild pony has a remarkably keen vision and is one of the most difficult of any of our plains animals to approach.



*“With the black mare beside him the stallion often ran to the top of the hill and would stand with his proud head held high and scan the prairie in every direction”*



## WILD PONIES OF THE PLAINS

"Long Bob," the elder of the two cowboys, a fine fellow with a noble character despite his rough exterior, had another and to him a more important motive through which he was determined to capture the mare. The district school teacher who taught the village school down by the crossroads had expressed a desire to possess the animal. Long Bob admired the bright, congenial girl and secretly hoped to outdo the boys and gratify her desire. Often while riding together over the prairie they had watched the spirited black steed from a distance. Repeatedly they rode up the ravines or around the hills in the direction of the band, but were seldom able to approach nearer than a mile of them. When discovered by the gray stallion he would raise his head, snort and paw, then run in the lead, whinny and take the entire band at full speed over two or three miles of prairie before they stopped. Then they would gather in a group on the highest elevation and, with the stallion in their midst, rest or play until they again saw their pursuers. Again they would paw in defiance and proudly gallop off.

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On one of these trips, as Long Bob and his companion rode along the edge of a broad alkali bed, they met a wise-looking little man who said he was from an eastern college and had come west in the interest of science to search for fossil animals. He explained to Long Bob and the much interested school teacher that ages ago the western plains were a country composed of many comparatively shallow lakes bordered with rank, weedy marshes and that from the fossil remains that had been found in this and preceding periods of the earth's history it has been proven that the antecedent of the horse was a little animal about the size of a fox, having four toes and a very large head. This period marked the beginning of the great group of vertebrate animals which includes man, the mammals. As the earth's surface gradually changed the horse, through the process of evolution, adapted itself to its environment; thus it passed through gradual stages of animal growth as the strongest and fleetest of its kind. In its upward progress there was an increase in stature and the size of the brain. As the food changed the teeth grew more com-

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plex. As the land grew high and dry it became necessary for the animal to develop more speed. The toes that had been so essential to keep its owner from sinking into the soft earth had now, through the demand made by its changing environment, diminished from four to three in number. Then gradually they merged into one solid toe or hoof, the most perfect construction for speed possessed by an animal. While the little Professor talked he succeeded in unearthing a fossil horse's tooth that was deeply imbedded in the alkali waste.

The band of wild ponies circled around and were now seen looking in their direction from a distant hill. The Professor looked at the grand exhibition of wild life, then he turned to Long Bob and his companion and said, "We have no proof that the ancient horse lived at the same time with early man in North America, but there are those who believe, from the many seemingly fresh remains, that the horse might have lived in his present wild state on the plains at the time of the first visit to the country by the Spaniards." "But," added the Professor, as they were about to leave him with



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his ancient thoughts and fossils, "the wild ponies that roam over the plains at the present time are descendants from the horses that strayed away from the Spaniards at the time of their invasion and became wild." The interest in the ponies grew deeper in the minds of the teacher and her cowboy friend as they thought of the ancient life and the progress of the horse. After that they often talked over the wonderful problem of life and they were inspired with new hopes and ambitions as they thought of the parting words of the wise little Professor. "Living beings cannot stand still indefinitely; they must progress or perish."

The cowboys followed the wild ponies on numerous occasions during the fall and winter, but always with barren results. The stallion and mare were off at first sight, closely followed by the others who ran with nearly equal speed; the less fleet ones following along in the rear with the little, white pony. Thus they often covered many a mile. Though apparently lost in the ravines or cañons, they always reappeared on some distant knoll. It was a veritable natural history game of hide and seek.

## WILD PONIES OF THE PLAINS

One day late in winter, when the school teacher and her companion were riding over the prairie in quest of jack-rabbits, they galloped to the top of a hill, moving against the wind. There at the mouth of the cañon stood the stallion and the greatly coveted mare, but a hundred rods away ! The horses were standing with their backs towards the riders, the stallion with his neck placed affectionately over that of the mare. Here was the cowboy's chance ! Dismounting, he drew a revolver from his belt and crept along in the dry grass, stopping a short distance from the horses. There he impatiently waited for the stallion to move his head away from the mare that he might shoot her through the gristle on the top of the neck. In this way he expected to stun her ; she would probably fall and then be easily captured. The teacher, trembling with suppressed excitement, took a rope from her saddle-horn and the rein from her horse's bridle ; she crept through the grass and reached her companion's side. Each moment seemed an hour, as the excited couple waited for the unsuspecting mare to place herself in the desired position. The teacher handed

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the bridle-rein to her companion to be used in strapping the mare's feet, that they might be sure of thoroughly controlling her ; through her wild nature she was a nervous, high-spirited horse, and would certainly be difficult to conquer. It is a rule, when the wild pony is captured in this way, that the shock given it when struck by a bullet completely subdues it and leaves it docile. The stallion now moved a trifle and lovingly bit the mare's neck. The teacher was certain the mare would move and bite back at him. This would give her companion the opportunity of bringing down the beautiful steed. Hurriedly she made a rope-noose to slip over the mare's under jaw and by which she expected they would triumphantly lead home the subdued animal. At that very moment the stallion, still standing between them and the mare, turned his head and with startled eyes looked straight at his would-be captors ; on the instant the mare leaped forward and had passed under the cliff with the stallion by her side before the cowboy could take certain aim. The disappointed couple ran back to their ponies, mounted and galloped off in hot pursuit. They

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only saw the stallion and mare with the remainder of the band up the cañon a mile or more in the distance and running at full speed. All the following spring and summer the ponies were frequently seen grazing upon the distant hills, but no one was known to approach nearer to them than a mile or so. During the cold winter months that followed food for the horses was very scarce. The ravines and cañons where the longest and choicest grass is to be found were covered with heavy snows. The wild ponies were driven by the severe northwest storms to the cañons for shelter. There, with their backs turned to the storm, they would stand for hours endeavoring to keep warm and for mutual protection. Many persons and very many animals have lost their lives in these terrific storms of the plains, which come almost without warning and cease as suddenly. Plains animals through instinct seek the most available shelter prior to a storm. Many a traveller along four-footed trails has saved his life by taking timely warning from animal instinct.

As the winter advanced, the ponies grew thin and looked rough and shaggy, save the black

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mare, who never seemed to lose any of her plumpness or her sleek coat. She was all the more striking by contrast when seen upon the snow-covered or bare brown hills, seeking food when the weather would permit, in company with her companions. The ponies kept close together for mutual protection against the coyotes who often attacked them in great numbers. They followed the band for days at a time, waiting a chance to fall upon the first pony that became too weak or crippled to keep up with his companions. They also ate such of their own kind as were killed by being kicked or trampled upon by the frantic ponies. When the life of a coyote was thus ended his nearby associates at once turned their attention to him, ferociously tearing him to pieces, speedily leaving only bones. Then with new strength and zeal they again joined their companions in the general attack. Many a pony, weak through lack of nourishment and the inclement weather, had his winter struggle ended as he became a meal for a hungry band of prowling prairie wolves. Natural enemies are cruel, blood-thirsty, ravenous, insatiable.

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When spring came, the boys with a number of other neighbors started on a final "run down," determined on capturing the long-sought mare. Each was mounted on his best horse, with a long lasso-rope coiled around the saddle-horn. They rode in the direction of the ponies' range, keeping well under cover of the hills much of the way. Several women, including the teacher, were in the party; they were bent on witnessing the capture of the famous and much admired mare. The band was observed feeding upon a slight elevation when the party emerged from the cover of a friendly cañon. All riding at top speed, were soon in the midst of the band, the teacher's admirer in the lead. He spurred his horse to its utmost speed as, with lasso in hand, he rushed among the surprised and rapidly scattering band in pursuit of the black mare. She, with the stallion by her side, was almost aimlessly running with long, graceful strides. The women, shouting with excitement, followed in the distance. Long Bob and the boys were in pursuit of the beautiful mare and her gallant defender, the gray stallion. As they sped over the prairies

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in their wild race for freedom, the mare and stallion became separated. Long Bob, encouraging his horse to renewed speed, swept by the other boys and gradually gained on the fleeing mare. The wild ponies were at a great disadvantage; the scarcity of food and exposure had both lessened their numbers and in a measure weakened them. The pursuers, with well-fed ponies, rapidly gained upon the fleeing animals and in a brief time several of the band, among them the vicious little white pony, were under the power of the lasso. But not so with the black mare; on and on she ran over hills and across the sand-beds, with as much ease as an ordinary domestic horse bounds over a smooth pavement, leaving a cloud of white dust between her and her pursuer. She entered a ravine and for a time was lost to view. The boys, fearing the mare would make good her escape, turned from their race for the flying stallion to aid their companion. They galloped across the prairie to head the mare from entering the alkali beds, where pursuit would be most difficult and trying; when the fleeing mare emerged from the ravine and saw the boys riding in her direction,

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she turned and flew back around the sand-beds and along a level stretch of country, across a prairie-dog town, avoiding the treacherous holes with skilled ease. On and on she ran back toward their old stamping-ground and the river, with the boys in hot pursuit. When Long Bob met the teacher they exchanged horses; with the fresh mount he rapidly gained on the tired mare and with one swing of the long lasso she was caught on the very hill where proud, wild and free she had been so much admired. In her frenzied efforts to escape she forcibly threw herself to the ground when she had run the length of the rope. Dismounting, her captor ran to her and strapped her fore feet together. The spirited animal plunged and fought and squealed in a vain effort to free herself, while her sleek black coat became thickly covered with white foam and dirt. While passing a rope-noose around the mare's under jaw a piece of her lower lip was accidentally torn away. This naturally added to the excited and frenzied condition of the animal. She plunged and fought until completely exhausted; trembling with broken pride, great tears rolled down



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her cheeks. While thus subdued, Long Bob burned the letter "R," which was his registered brand, on the quivering hide on the left flank of the mare. As the teacher bent over the suffering brute, the true sympathy of the woman went out for the captured animal; all her expected pleasure of possession fled before her stronger feeling of pity and remorse. Could she but snatch away the branded "R" that was forever to mar that beautiful, glossy black coat and again see the mare proud and free! She felt willing to make almost any sacrifice, but it was now too late. Never again was the beautiful mare to roam at liberty over the great expanse of prairie; never again to have her chosen companion. Shorn of her free, wild grandeur, the remainder of her life must be at the service of master man, under his will and command.

When the stallion found he was not pursued he turned and ran back within full view of the mare, following at a distance to the end of the exciting "run down." Then from a near-by knoll he pawed the earth, whinnied and ran in a circle in a most aimless and grief-stricken

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manner. Presently he stopped, looked in the direction of the prostrate mare, snorted and pawed the earth. He whinnied and whinnied, coming nearer and nearer in his fruitless effort to again call to his side his lost companion. Presently the animal was freed so she could rise to her feet and in company with her likewise captured associates they were driven to the corral on the Lone-Tree Ranch. The teacher rode beside the elated possessor of the black mare. Her heart still ached for the seemingly crushed and subdued animal. She was a sincere admirer of her one inseparable companion, the plains pony and loved a horse as only a western woman could. With deep sympathy she marked the change in the proud-spirited mare in her wild state and beauty, gracefully cantering with her head high held beside the gray stallion and the now trembling, maimed, crestfallen and spiritless animal covered with dirt and foam. Burdened with these thoughts, the teacher was robbed of much of the expected pleasure when the cowboy gallantly presented her with the long wished-for animal. With tender love and sympathy she approached the trembling horse,

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with its quivering and bleeding lip, and looked long and steadily into the liquid eyes of the captive. Whether there was anything in this I know not, but their souls seemed to meet, the dumb and the ruler. The teacher tenderly bathed the torn lip and made the mare as comfortable as she could. In the days that followed the animal regained her spirit, but grew more nervous and vicious. The firm, persistent patience of the teacher won the confidence and love of the mare at length and with comparatively little difficulty she was broken to ride and drive. She lost none of her fleetness in her captive state and was known as one of the best trotters in that country. There were few who saw her that could resist the temptation of endeavoring to persuade the teacher to part with her possession. The horse seemed never to forget that it was a man who had captured her and would bite and paw at any man who attempted to enter her stall or to catch her when in the corral. No man was ever able to touch her back as a rider. The men who tried came near paying for the effort to do so with their lives. One unfortunate cowboy was thrown and seriously injured. He would have been

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pawed to death on the spot only for the timely interference of the teacher. In the animal's most excited moments the sound of the teacher's voice would always calm her. She was the first in her subdued state to soothe her, the first to give her food and comfort and the first and only one who ever loved and mastered her. Between them existed a human, not brute, confidence.

The stallion and the few remaining followers were soon captured by being driven into a corral made for that purpose. They were the last of the wild ponies in that region. But the memory of the proud animals in nature's freedom never will be forgotten.

The little white pony was purchased by an eastern visitor who, wishing to improve his appearance, had undertaken to shear his shaggy white coat, cutting it into layers, or "little steps" as the children expressed it. The man was very desirous of having his sister ride the pony and asked the school-teacher if she would attempt riding the animal until it became accustomed to a woman upon its back. The young lady readily consented, enjoying nothing better than a bit of excitement as this venture promised

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to be. Early one morning she saddled the thin, hide-bound, stupid-looking, pink-eyed pony and attempted to start for a neighboring farm-house. The pony not being of the same mind as his rider, braced his fore-feet and with his head lowered stubbornly refused to move. When persistently urged he let fly his hind feet several times in genuine bronco fashion — then started off on a slow, hard trot that rattled the rider's teeth and shook her up generally. Presently he seemed to think it was time to stop and with his head down stood perfectly motionless amid blows and forcible pulling by the bit. Then without warning, when it was least expected, he sprang forward with the bit between his teeth and ran for several miles at top speed; with one final spring, he unceremoniously braced his fore-feet and came to a standstill, throwing the rider almost out of the saddle and over his head. After this he seemed convinced that he was not to part company with his mount. He loped along at an easy gait in the most approved way until they reached their destination. It rained all that night and the following day. During this time the pony had been stabled

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and well fed. Late in the afternoon the teacher arranged to take her departure and wished to return home in a cart; having been told that the pony was well broken to drive she hooked him to a vehicle and pulling the rein through the bridle tied the little brute to a hitching-post until ready to start. When these plains ponies or broncos, as they are called, are allowed to stand for a few days and are well fed all their wild spirit returns and they must again be subdued. The teacher neglected to take this fact into consideration, untied the horse in her accustomed manner, when the vicious pony bit and struck at her with his fore-feet, then sprang forward and ran around the yard kicking in an endeavor to free himself from the cart, pulling the teacher along. She firmly held on to the rein that had slipped some distance through her hands. When the frenzied pony reached a large corn-pile that stood in the yard he turned sharply, throwing the teacher flat upon the rough ears of corn and pulling the strap out of her hand. The pony ran around the yard and made straight for the stoop, where the women of the family stood, waving their sun-

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bonnets and screaming in alarm. He then made a complete circle, coming back by the hitching-post and catching the wheel of the cart on the timber, throwing himself on his side in the mud. Now the teacher had regained her feet and running to the pony sat on its head until help could be summoned. After considerable difficulty and danger the teacher and her friends succeeded in freeing the animal from the obnoxious cart and harness. Still vicious and defiant the pony, covered with mud, was led back to his owner by the tired and greatly disgusted young woman. The man from the East did not appreciate or understand the real nature of a plains pony. He never forgave the treatment that western girl gave his highly prized horse, for which he had paid the regal sum of twelve dollars !

The teacher traded the black mare to a Methodist preacher who had long desired the high-stepper, but soon learned to his sorrow that the spirited animal would not forget her beloved mistress ; she grew both vicious and dangerous. She changed hands several times and at last was sold at auction to a young man

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who, not knowing her reputation, laughingly made a small bid "just to start the thing agoing," and his being the only bid made he was obliged to complete his purchase.

Later the teacher returned and hearing of the fate of her long loved pony, rode out with her present owner to see her. The mare was on the lariat when she saw the teacher and heard her call; she whinnied and ran excitedly to meet her. The anxious animal came to the end of her rope with such force that she pitched forward and fell, breaking her neck. She died in an effort to reach the only person who had ever loved or understood how to manage her. In her wild state she had been admired by all who saw her, but in captivity she had been hated and feared by all save one.



## BUFFALOES

**T**HE great herds of buffalo were a thing of the past. All that remained of these huge animals were a few scattered, small herds, each consisting of not more than one or two dozen individuals. These stupid monarchs of the plains, after millions of their noble family had been slaughtered, had learned to keep close to the cañons and away from the relentless robe-hunter and the Indian.

A little band of three cows and six old bulls made their feeding-ground near our claim. They were often seen mingling with the domestic cattle when they roamed over the prairie during the fall and winter. As I repeatedly watched them feeding at a distance over the divide, I was moved to sympathy and pity for the poor brutes that in so short a time had been reduced

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from the companionship of lordly herds. They were one of the few bands left as a reminder of the countless numbers that but a few years before had held the country for miles and miles as their own undisputed domain.

Repeatedly I listened with interest as Casper, an old plainsman who for several years made his home with us, would tell me of a thrilling experience we had in the spring of 1871. I was but a babe in my mother's arms at the time. But it has been so deeply impressed upon my imagination it seems as though I must have felt and understood it. Early one morning a much frightened and excited ranchman rode to our "dugout" and informed us that he had shot two Sioux Indians out of a party of five who had been stealing some of his cattle. He feared there would be an Indian "outbreak" and was warning the settlers that they might prepare to go to the Fort for protection until peace again reigned. In those days the frontiersman was never free from the anxiety of attack by some band of hostile Indians. Many a defenceless farmer or his lone family during these Indian "outbreaks" lost their lives through a sneak-

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ing, blood-thirsty warrior on his mission of revenge.

As soon as the appalling news of the rash act of the ranchman was known, hurried preparations were made for our departure. With pale, anxious faces each would stop and listen to every strange sound, momentarily expecting to be surprised by the infuriated savages. At last the few necessary things were gathered together into a covered wagon and with the neighbors who had joined us we were soon on our way across the plains to the Fort.

As we rode along in the hot sun we noticed many small, black objects looming up in the distance and as often feared they might prove to be a band of hostile Indians. In a short time, however, the objects became plainer when it was seen they were great herds of buffalo numbering many thousand head slowly moving northward. The prairie was literally dotted with the huge forms of these noble animals almost as far as the eye could see. When we drew nearer to them we saw the larger herd was separated into many smaller ones with the bulls of each group on the outside of their own

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flock. Thus they grazed slowly moving. Since they were travelling away from us the men in our party thought we would be able to pass them without alarm. During the afternoon a stray buffalo heifer was shot by one of our advance guards. We were about to stop on the banks of a stream for supper when one of the buffalo herds, a mile in the distance, reached a swell on the undulating prairie. From this elevation some of the more advanced cows noticed us. The cows are always most watchful and are, as a rule, the first to notice approaching danger. Presently the bulls began to roar and the cows to bellow. Then they took fright and started in one mad rush toward us bringing all the others with them as they passed through their ranks. The herds gathered together into one great mass and as they ran the bulls of the smaller bands gradually worked themselves to the outside. On and on they came in their wild stampede! Thousands upon thousands of these big, awkward animals with their clumsy, lumbering gallop and their great, shaggy manes and heads lowered in most ferocious attitude, snorting and bellowing amidst a tremendous

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cloud of dust were sweeping down upon our defenceless little party of twenty-seven men, women and children. It seemed the animals would shortly trample us to death in their frenzied flight. Most of the men were cursing at the frightened, plunging horses and oxen and the children were screaming while their mothers prayed. Above it all rose the commanding voice of your father as he ordered those who were armed to shoot at the animals in the hope of saving our lives when the herd was almost upon us. As they approached we repeatedly shot into the leading portion of the mass. The advancing animals separated and passed on either side of us, leaped across the stream and galloped on over the prairie. Within a half hour they had passed by leaving us frightened and dirty but unharmed. When we came upon the divide we saw in the distance the great herd quietly feeding until darkness shut them from our view.

It was about this time that a trading-post was established upon the east bank of the river near our claim. From the door of our "dugout" and facing the west was a beautiful view of the

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sloping prairie with a typical western village in the distance with several small shanties, one of which had a "lean-to" and was used for the post-office and hotel. A general store, two saloons, blacksmith-shop and sod school-house, that was also used as a place of worship on Sundays, all strung along on either side of its one crooked street constituted this little trading-post that was seventy miles from the nearest railroad. Between the town and the river was a strip of fine white sand with its miniature crystal grains brilliantly sparkling in the sunlight. Then came the river with its swiftly flowing current, treacherous quicksands and its banks bordered with tall cottonwood trees; here and there was a clump of willows or a box-elder; beyond were the long green hills that made the horizon. The atmosphere of the plains is so clear one can readily discern objects at a surprisingly great distance. Several years had passed; one of my earliest childhood recollections was one evening when we sat watching this grand scene while the sun sank beneath the horizon leaving the sky with a ruddy glow that was reflected upon the water. Meanwhile time passed and darkness

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crept over the landscape; all was still and quiet save the sweet, sad call of the turtle-dove.

In the morning when we awoke all was changed. A familiar scene was spread before us. The beautiful, green hillside beyond the river was thickly populated. A quaint, white village had sprung up from the ground during the night. This white city was composed of hundreds of "tepees" pitched by a large band of Indians who had come to the Post for the purpose of trading. Around their tepees were many dogs and scores of horses were grazing on the nearby hillside.

The Indians brought numbers of buffalo robes with them to trade for blankets, beads and the many trinkets that chanced to take their fancy. They generally stayed for several days and during this time feasted and danced within their village. Most of the robes they offered in barter had been secured during the winter when the fur is in its best condition. At this time the Indians hunted the buffalo when they gathered in the ravines and cañons to feed and were overtaken by the heavy snow that is not easily piled into great drifts by the wind in these

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low places. Through this snow the progress of the buffalo was retarded and the Indians surrounding them on foot killed vast numbers with little difficulty.

The great numbers of buffalo that roamed the prairie in '71 were rapidly disappearing under the destructive hands of the relentless robe-hunters and Indians. The few thousand that then remained confined themselves to the prairies of western Kansas, the Indian Territory and northwestern Texas—save by chance a lone old bull or a few stragglers that had become separated from the main herds and wandered away through the cañons in self-protection as had the little band that were such familiar objects near our claim.

In six years' time practically all that was left of the great herds was their bones bleached white by the sun and the elements. The deep ruts that were made by them in travelling in single file over the same path and the smooth round depressions made by the animals tearing up the dirt, generally in moist places, and then rolling in the depression afterward to cool the body and rid themselves of insect pests, were



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everywhere to be seen. These depressions are known as "buffalo wallows." As time passed the older wallows were filled with vegetation and loose soil washed from the surrounding elevations and a rich growth of plant life more luxurious and green than that surrounding it could be found.

One day while we were watching the little group of buffalo on the divide Casper with a far-away look in his moist eyes, said "I remember when great herds of those noble animals roamed over this very ground. It was late in the 'sixties'; a herd numbering several thousand came roaring and galloping down this slope and made straight for the river. As they crossed the sand a white cloud of dust completely hid the leaders; on they went heedlessly plunging into the shallow water and were soon rapidly sinking into the treacherous quicksand, others blindly followed right on top of their struggling and rapidly disappearing companions; then came still others urged on by those immediately behind them and so on until large numbers of the stupid animals had thus lost their lives, in their headlong, determined flight. The others floundering among

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the dead and dying, or floating with the current, at last reached the opposite shore and started up the hill—only to be met by a party of robe-hunters who were camped near by. The unfortunate animals fell thick and fast under the deadly aim of these plains huntsmen. In less than half an hour there were nearly two hundred dead animals strewn upon the hillside. Many of the noble creatures that succeeded in getting away foolishly returned and stood in the distance stupidly gazing at their dead companions until they were again pursued and fared the same fate. The following day all that was left of this great herd were the hideless bodies surrounded by wolves, vultures and other animals; and those that floated in the current, with their large, white, sightless eyes turned heavenward. One old bull was held in a vise of sand where he had died in a struggle to free himself while all around him his struggling companions sank lower and lower in the bottomless sand groaning and snorting for breath until they were at last engulfed. For days the old bull stood in midstream a last reminder of the great mass of life that in a single day had been swept from the prairie. This was

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shortly to be the sad fate of all their kind. The carrion birds feasted and the odor of decaying flesh tainted the air."

The buffalo was indispensable to the plains Indian in his natural state. It furnished his principal article of food, while the robes were used for his lodge, his clothing, his saddles and his bedding; the skin scraped free from the hair was cut in strips and was made to serve as lariats and lassoes. The horns and bones were converted into spoons, knives and other useful articles. There were a number of ways in which the Indians killed the buffalo. One method was to surround them. They would mount their best trained "buffalo horses" and armed with bow and arrow—but later, when white men invaded their domain, with firearms obtained from them—ride around gradually enclosing the herd when in a surprisingly short time and with comparatively few accidents they would bring the entire mass of unfortunate animals to the ground. At other times they would indulge in the sport of racing for them on their fleetest ponies, or disguised under buffalo robes or wolf skins creep amidst the wondering unsuspecting herd. The stupid

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animals would generally stand until many were dropped by the sure aim of the Indians' arrows.

The little band that fed near my childhood home, long since made shy by ruthless slaughter, could be seen almost any pleasant day during the winter feeding near or with our cattle. In the latter part of March, I noticed one day that a little buffalo calf had been added to the herd; by the last of June there were two more calves gamboling around their proud, devoted mothers. There was a deep, narrow gulch at the head of the cañon known to the settlers as "The Devil's Gap." One warm day in early summer one of the old buffalo bulls walked to the edge of the Gap and stood stupidly and vacantly gazing for some time. Presently he lowered himself on one knee and began tearing the earth with his short stout horns. When he had dug up a foot of the clay it became moist for there was a spring of water that trickled out from the side of the Gap but a few feet below him. When the old bull struck the wet sub-soil he threw up the dirt for eighteen or twenty feet around, then lay down in the soft depression and began to "wallow." One after another the huge animals

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followed their old leader and wallowed in the cool mud, rolling over and over until they had plastered their brown, woolly, fur coats almost smooth with the sticky yellow clay. The little calves soon learned to partake of this refreshing and soothing "buffalo bath."

During the summer a number of Indians came on horseback to our little band of buffalo, as I was very fond of calling them, and killed two of the cows. When the herd broke and ran one of the little calves became separated from the others. Seeing it, Casper mounted his horse and rode in pursuit. The calf ran for some distance but was soon headed and driven to the house. He became very tame in time and was a great pet in our barnyard. He was fed with milk which he sucked from my hand until taught to drink from the pail. Shortly after this while Casper and I were riding over the divide another of the calves was found with his head stuck into a clump of sage brush—a common habit when pursued. They imagined, seemingly, that if their heads were covered they were hidden entirely. After some butting and kicking on the part of the calf, Casper succeeded

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in blowing his breath into her nostrils when she seemed to lose all her wildness and fear and followed close on the heels of our ponies to the barnyard. She became the companion of the first calf who was now the monarch of the yard. The calves were known as "Governor" and "Princess." In the fall they changed their baby coats of sandy red for dark brown ones. When Governor was three years old he was a beautiful animal nearly eight feet long, with a large, noble head, a long beard beneath his chin, short, rounded horns and big, gentle, brown eyes that were almost hidden by the long, dark hair on his head, as were his ears and the base of his horns. His body was covered with short, dark-brown, woolly fur with a shaggy mane over his high shoulders down to his knees. His hind quarters were much lower and comparatively weaker. His tail was smooth, with a large tuft on the end. I shall never forget the fine picture he made as he stood pawing the ground on the hill near the Gap at sunrise with the red-purple tints of the sky for a background and greeting me with his friendly roaring and bellowing. Then as I stood and waved to him he

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would put his head down and gallop towards me in most threatening attitude only to stop within a few feet of me as gentle as could be.

Princess had also grown to be a fine and gentle animal though not nearly so large as Governor and was the proud possessor of a little half-breed calf. Often I rode about the yard upon her back with Casper near by, while Governor sullenly walked behind or by her side. One afternoon as I climbed upon her back for a ride she seemed to take fright at the flapping of the skirt of my new, bright calico dress against her sides. With a snort she lowered her head and started on a wild gallop toward the cañon. Casper mounted a bronco that stood in the yard and rode in hot pursuit. I clung on to Princess's short, woolly fur the best I could and called to her between jolts to stop! She was too frightened to heed me and only seemed to run faster as she plunged forward in frenzied flight. Casper followed close behind and shouted to me to hold on for my life. When Princess reached the cañon with one plunge she leaped down its vertical side some fifteen feet below, then climbed up the opposite

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bank and stood stupidly gazing at vacancy. As she plunged I lost my hold and was thrown into a soft pile of loose clay and gravel. Over and over I rolled with the loose soil and stones down the side of the cañon. I was not seriously hurt, only badly frightened, bruised and dirty. When Casper had carried me up the cañon side and placed me on the front of his saddle, I noticed my beloved Princess grazing quietly as she walked slowly homeward. It was the last time I ever rode Princess, and I took good care that she never again saw my bright calico dress.

Governor did good service as a beast of burden upon the farm in company with a domestic steer. One cold day in the following winter there was a light snowstorm and when the storm ceased the weather moderated. During the day the top of the snow melted before the wind arose to blow it into drifts as it commonly did upon the treeless plains. Toward night it grew colder and the soft snow became a hard and smooth crust. This gave an opportunity for a sleigh ride which was almost an unknown pleasure for the frontiersman. A set of rough runners were made and a hay rack placed upon them in which



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a generous supply of hay, buffalo robes and blankets were piled. On this rode the young people from the trading-post who had assembled for the much discussed sleigh ride. They were then comfortably tucked in this luxurious if not ornamental conveyance with Governor and the steer hooked on to carry them over the white-robed prairie. The moon and stars were shining brightly from an azure sky. At last the jolly party laughing and shouting amid the tinkling of two cowbells about the necks of Governor and the steer, started upon that memorable moonlight ride. For some time the animals moved along in a dog trot fashion while the driver plied his whip with "haw" or "gee" as occasion demanded. No matter how he whipped and urged them with his shouts; they went right on at the same pace until they passed a neighbor's dugout and aroused his dogs. These animals ran after the strange looking sled, barking and growling at Governor and the steer who took fright and ran away at full speed. They soon got entirely out of the control of the driver. On and on they ran, the great cowbells ringing, the driver shouting and the now thoroughly frightened

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pleasure seekers screaming as the rickety sleigh fairly flew over the ground, first on one pair of runners then on the other but seldom on all four. Amid all the noise and confusion were to be heard the dismal howls of a pack of hungry coyotes. The sleigh was now being pulled over a level stretch of hay land and its occupants were growing more confident of their safety. Then it was noticed that their frightened bovine steeds were making for a long haystack partly hidden in the recently fallen snow. The driver bootlessly endeavored to turn them from their headlong course. The frenzied animals seemed to run the faster. They soon reached the dreaded obstacle, overturning the sleigh as the fore runner struck the stack, throwing all of the occupants into the snowdrift. The animals sped on and soon they seemed to be but a speck in the distance. The tinkling of the rapidly disappearing bells came back as a defiance on the frosty air. Then followed the long, weary tramp through the snow on the homeward journey with the added burden of a stray robe or blanket that had been picked up on the way. When our home was reached there stood the jaded

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animals munching hay but still hooked to what was left of the sleigh. When Governor saw the driver he turned showing only the whites of his eyes as he shook his head and bellowed. His bellow seemed to say "On another straw-ride select a proper steed!"

During the three years that passed since the buffalo calves came to live as our pets the little herd on the prairie had not fared so well. They nearly all had been killed by stray Indians or strange robe-hunters. The only one left was an old bull who could be seen any warm day during the summer making his way to the buffalo wallow at the head of "Devil's Gap." It was pitiful to see him, lame, his head lowered, and stumbling along in defenceless solitude. Once one of the proud protectors of a large noble herd he had lived to see them all perish, even his last little band that he had so often led to the wallow that he had made for his and their comfort. Now, shorn of all his glory, he was left as the only monument in that region of one of the grandest sights of the plains and one never to be forgotten, a great herd of noble buffaloes. When winter approached and food became scarce the

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poor, lone beast grew more and more feeble. He was followed and worried by hungry, prowling coyotes that tore at his legs and face in an effort to pull him down and devour him. The noble animal fought bravely and succeeded in warding off his enemies for several days. One cold moonlight night as he lay down to rest and chew his cud on the side of the hill near the old wallow he was aroused by the howling of an approaching pack of coyotes. With painful effort he arose on his weak, trembling legs to face his foes and ward them off. They sprang at him from all sides tearing his flanks, his face, his eyes.

Crazed with pain he broke loose from the ferocious coyotes and stumbled forward toward the wallow and the great Gap, the wolves in close pursuit and rapidly gaining upon him. As he stood on the edge of the deep Gap with his head lowered in his last "stand" for life, the wolves snapping and growling around him, my father and I approached on horseback on our way home from a children's neighborhood party. We tried to frighten the wolves away but were too late. The poor hounded brute ended his

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own life as he stepped backward and plunged down the cañon's side into "Devil's Gap"!

We drove the howling, snarling coyotes off, then rode to the edge of the Gap for a last look at the lifeless form of the old bull lying seventy feet below. Often he had been chased and shot at by his bitterest enemies — the white man and the Indian. Often he had nobly fought to protect the calves and weaker animals of his flock from their natural enemies only to survive them all and die alone, maimed, starving and weak. Pursued to the last, he was saved by the friendly Gap from being literally torn to pieces and devoured by his life-long murderous pursuers. The buffalo wallow at the head of "Devil's Gap" was never used after the death of the grand old bull who made it. The mud that had dropped in balls from the buffalo's tail as he rolled in the wallow grew hard and dry in the sun as did also the smooth depression. It was known as the "Devil's Pool-Table," and the hard balls of mud, composed of clay and gravel that were often rolled about by the wind on a stormy night, were known as the "Devil's Pool-Balls." Often as the wind roared in the



*"As he stood on the edge of the deep Gap with  
his head lowered in his last 'stand' for life"*



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Gap and the rock-like balls rolled against one another in the old wallow, I always imagined I could again hear the roaring of the old bull as he pawed the ground and threw the loose stones about with his horns. Then I would walk to the edge of the Gap and look down on the bleached white bones that were rapidly being covered by the falling soil and with a sad heart drop a tear to the memory of the old monarch of the plains.

Sitting one day on the edge of the Gap, looking at the old wallow and the rock-like balls rolling about, something was thrown over my head and I was roughly rolled in the covering. The voices and grunts of Indians were heard with each shake I received. I screamed with fear and made every effort to release myself. Though the Indians from the Reservation which was near by had always been on friendly terms with us, I remembered with horror how only a few weeks before a man living but six miles from our place had been scalped by some passing Indians and left lying dead in the newly ploughed furrow while the oxen patiently stood hitched to the plough. After some effort,



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trembling and crying, I crawled out from a buffalo robe that had been thrown over me by the friendly hands of the great Sioux Indian warrior — Sitting Bull — to whom I had often given slices of home-made bread spread with sorghum, of which he seemed very fond. There he stood with one of his squaws, who had carried the robe, beside him. They grunted and jumped about me as I was told the robe was to be mine. There were many characters and figures stained on the inside of the robe. These Sitting Bull explained represented a war between his people and another tribe of Indians. He looked at the old buffalo wallow, then at the bones of the old bull at the bottom of the Gap. Then he stood up and looked off across the prairie. With a firm, set face he pulled his blanket tightly around him as he said "No more buffalo for my people, no lands; white man take all." Then he stalked down the hill to our house followed by the squaw and seemed much amused as he watched a half-breed boy who with myself was stumbling along under the weight of the large buffalo robe in an effort to carry it home.

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For many years after, even when I was a grown woman, the robe answered for a warm covering for my bed on a cold night or to shield me from the piercing wind on many a long journey over the prairie. It was unfortunately stolen from my cart while attending a religious meeting! I lost one of my warmest friends.

## THE MUSKRAT AND ITS HOME AS JOE AND I KNEW THEM

**J**OE was an honest, good-natured, half-breed Indian. He was six years my senior, tall and ungainly, with broad, square shoulders, straight, black hair, sharp eyes and high cheekbones. He came to live with us on my eighth birthday, in consequence of which I always called him my birthday gift. He was my constant companion and playmate for several years.

During the time Joe was a member of our family we lived on a "preemption" and timber claim. A clear stream of water with low banks ran along its eastern boundary; a branch of the stream extended into a broad slough filled with long, sharp-edged slough-grass, cat-tail rushes and spatterdock with their broad leather-like leaves.

Along the edge of the slough grew patches

## THE MUSKRAT AND ITS HOME

of tall sunflowers which raised their bright yellow and brown heads to greet the first rays of the morning sun. They turned slowly during the day and reverently bowed a farewell to him when he disappeared at evening.

Late one afternoon in July, as Joe and I were rowing down the stream in his rude canoe, we noticed two dark objects in the water. Soon they were joined by another. All we could see was the tops of their heads and the tips of their tails. The heads were about the size of those of our common house-cats. Joe said they were muskrats, or "musquash," as the Indians called them. He quietly pushed the canoe alongside of the bank under the shadow of a large cottonwood tree which bent its branches over the stream. From this sheltered point we watched the muskrats aimlessly floating about about on the water. Presently they swam down stream, the old one taking the lead with the young rats about a foot behind. They swam with a strong muscular stroke, using their long toes which have stiff hairs between them that interlace to form a web and act like the oars of a boat, as they push their legs out against the water,

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but which hang loosely, permitting the water to pass through them when they pull their legs back again. The young rat on the right was almost abreast of the old one; another stroke and their noses were even; meanwhile the poor little fellow on the left was all alone in the rear!

On and on they swam. Ah! the young rat has lost ground, the old one is head and shoulders in the lead. Now they dive and are lost to view. The young one has gained on the old one while under water and they are again even in the race. They swim until they reach a bend in the stream where the race ends with the young rat a half head in the lead. They have turned and are slowly paddling up stream. The little one in the rear has taken advantage of his position and turning when the old one did, leads out, swimming hard against the current. Now he turns, floats back to his companions and with the old one in the middle the three swim up stream abreast.

As they cut through the water with their chins resting on its surface the little v-shaped ripples caused by their bodies widened into larger ones until the miniature waves reached

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from shore to shore. As the sun's last rays spread across their surface they burst into wonderful splendor showing all the colors of the rainbow. The rats were seemingly all unconscious of the beauty that surrounded them and reaching their starting place again aimlessly float; or tumbling over and over in the water they chase one another about as though playing a game of tag. Again they are off for another race. On their return the two young rats crawled upon a water-soaked log that lay near the bank on the opposite side of the stream, while the big one scampered up the side of the bank and disappeared. The muskrats on the log shook their fur, which was as dry as though they had never touched the water, and combed the hair about their heads and necks with their paws. Presently one of them dived from the log into the water; soon he emerged with a fresh-water clam between his paws, pulled himself upon the log and sat down. As soon as his companion saw the much coveted morsel he tried to take it, but did not succeed; he received for his selfishness instead an angry bite on his shoulder from the long, sharp front teeth of the other rat and two cuts

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on his naked tail. After squeaking three times he ran to the other end of the log, plunged into the water and secured a clam for himself. The first muskrat gnawed at the clam-shell for some time when it seemed to open ; then he pulled the animal out with his paw and ate it.

The rats seemed to forget the struggle of but a moment before as each dived, secured and ate his clams. While they were thus busily engaged our attention was attracted by the excited calls of a blue-jay. Looking up we saw a large marsh-hawk sailing slowly and smoothly on noiseless wings with its owl-like face and big yellow eyes peering downward over the all unconscious muskrats. With one quick dive the hawk swooped upon the smallest rat. With his sharp talons he bore the luckless animal away to his home among the bunches of slough-grass and sunflowers. The other rat dived into the water and swam for some distance before he ventured to come to the surface for a breath of air and to see if he was out of harm's way. He floated for a few minutes, looked all around him and then swam up stream. As he passed us I spoke. Instantly he dived into the water and

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when he came up he was some thirty feet away. After swimming for a long distance he headed for the bank and when within a few feet of it he dived again and was lost to sight. He had entered his burrow or summer home at this point by an entrance under the water. Joe rowed me across the stream to the log upon which the muskrats had feasted so contentedly. We found several empty clam-shells; a part of the clams had been taken and eaten by the poor little fellow who in turn was forced to give up his life to the big marsh-hawk for her family supper. Such is Nature's law of compensation!

Joe and I knew the marsh-hawk's nest was down by the swamp in a little patch of sun-flowers. It was made of grass, lined sparingly with feathers and occupied by four young hawks. As we rowed home in the moonlight, without a sound but the splashing of the oars, I thought of the marsh-hawks. The beautiful male, his more quietly dressed mate and their little ones with feathers the color of their mother's, flitted across my mind. How they would enjoy their supper as they held the body of the unfortunate little muskrat under their claws and tore off the



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tender morsels of its red flesh with their strong, hooked bills.

The poor muskrat would never know the joys of a western winter. It seemed a pity that he must die the first summer of his life. Joe said that each wild animal was obliged to live at the expense of some other. It was his way of saying that the "survival of the fittest" was one of the great laws of nature.

The next morning Joe and I returned on horseback to the point on the bank of the stream where the surviving young rat had entered his burrow the previous night. As we rode along a short distance back from the bank the turf gave away under one of the front feet of my pony. Joe said that must be near the end of the burrow because it was so near the surface. He opened the burrow for several feet when we came to a larger cavity lined with some dry grass upon which lay seven hairless little muskrats with their eyes closed. There were two other avenues like this branching off from the first one we found and as we neared the bank the burrow ran down to a depth of four feet, with three entrances, all under water. Muskrats may do

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much damage to pasture-land and dams by undermining them in this way. On our way home we noticed a large muskrat swimming toward the opposite shore with some long, greenish-white roots in his mouth. Presently he reached an old stump that stood nearly a foot above the water. He climbed upon it and began washing the roots. When they were thoroughly cleaned he ate them in a most greedy manner until the last root was devoured. He then sat so perfectly still that it was impossible to distinguish him from a part of the stump.

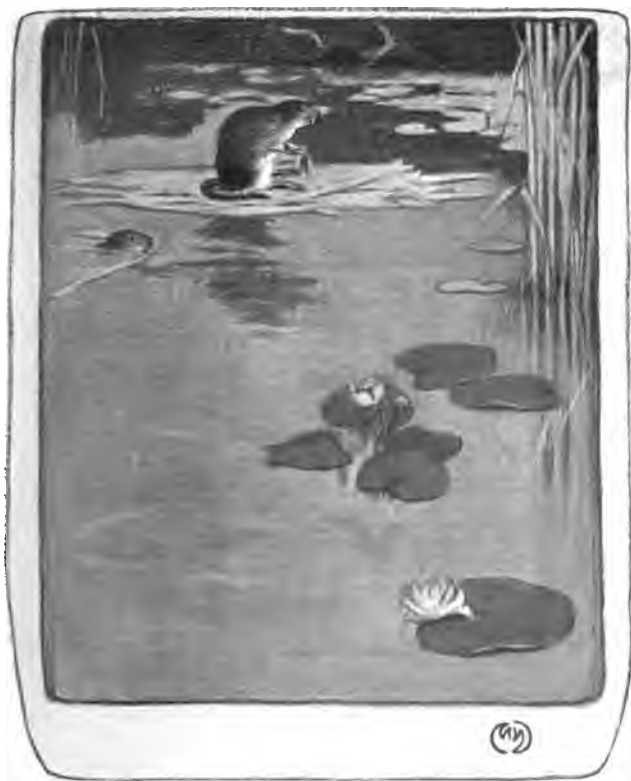
One afternoon in late September Joe and I were picking wild grapes. We were anxious to fill our baskets and so had remained at our task until after sundown. Joe carried his own home-made willow basket and we both carried mine between us. As we tramped along in the dusk of the early evening, catching our feet now and then in wild cucumber vines, running into a clump of cockle burs, or treading on a bunch of sand burs, we rounded the bend of the stream near a sandbar where the channel was narrow and shallow enough to wade across. Splash! splash! splash! was the only sound that greeted

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our ears from down the stream. We knew the muskrats had been disturbed and were sounding the alarm along the river. As they plunged into the water Joe said if I would watch the baskets he would try and catch one in the way he had been taught by an old Indian.

Selecting a heavy stick six feet long he lay flat on the ground face downward and began to make a curious, squeaking sound with his lips. Keeping this up for some time, a large muskrat with heavy dark-brown fur, with a mixture of longer stiff glossy hairs of a darker color, tiny ears and little, black bead-like eyes set back on the sides of a broad, flat head, finally answered the half-breed's call. As the muskrat crawled up the side of the bank, Joe struck it across the back of its neck with the stick he held in waiting. Thus all unconsciously it was lured to death. The Indians were very fond of the flesh of the muskrat and formerly killed many of them for food as Joe did this one.

Joe skinned the muskrat and from the fur a cap was made. He also took the secretion with its peculiar musk-odor from the glands in which it is found. This secretion is used for scenting



*“As soon as it would hold the weight of  
a muskrat, one mounted the platform”*



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the bait which he placed on the traps he had set for mink.

One day near the middle of October, Joe and I noticed two large muskrats with long rushes in their mouths swimming toward a spot in the slough where the water was five or six feet deep after the heavy fall rains. One animal placed the rushes side by side while the other dived and brought up more; these were placed cross-wise upon the first layer; the next layer was placed from one corner to the other; thus layer after layer was added so as to form a circular raft. As soon as it would hold the weight of a muskrat, one mounted the platform and seemed to be cutting rushes and roots into small pieces to fill in the open spaces between the long rushes and thus make the mass solid. As more material was added its weight caused the raft to sink. Then the muskrats would begin all over, only to have it sink again; thus they worked day after day seeming never to tire.

At the end of the third week the platform remained on the surface of the water for several days; we then knew they had succeeded in building the under stories of their winter home.

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Dry slough-grass was now placed on the platform, then the animals dived and pulled up the rushes and lilies by the roots with large masses of the earth adhering and built them into the house, plastering the hut on the outside in a crude way with the mud from the roots. They now burrowed into their newly made hut near the bottom, digging upwards to above the water level; here they dug a small chamber a foot across, over the spot where they had placed the dry slough-grass. A similar passage was dug down the opposite side, making an avenue somewhat the shape of the letter U turned upside down. The southeast side was dug much nearer the surface than the others to admit air. A number of other entrances were made under the water by which to escape in time of danger. Many of these homes were built over the slough. In the bend of the river two of the muskrats built their home between two crooked forks of a willow tree that had been submerged by the water, cutting a new channel and causing it to flow around a bend where the loose soil and sand had been washed away by previous spring freshets.

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They carried slough-grass, spatterdock and cat-tail rushes, winding them in the flexible, short limbs of the tree, which helped to hold more securely the gathered material. When they had built a mound three or more feet above the water and nearly four feet across, they finished the outside with large spatterdock leaves and long blades of grass mixed with mud, giving it the appearance of a thatched roof. All muskrat huts are not built like those which Joe and I knew. They build according to the place, material and climate in which they live; but all muskrat homes are made on the same general plan, if not as perfect in architecture as the two above described, watching which Joe and I spent part of each day for over a month, meanwhile learning to love the little furry builders.

Back of our house were pits of potatoes, carrots and parsnips covered with straw and earth, stored thus for safe keeping for the early spring market. On the afternoon of a late November day Joe and I noticed the tops of carrots and turnips, with now and then a part of a root, scattered around the pits and along little paths that led from the pits down the hill to the slough.



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Joe said the paths were muskrat runways and the little duck-like tracks were those of the muskrat. On closer examination he found they had dug in under the pits and carried away several bushels of our vegetables. Traps were set along the runways near the vegetable pits that night, and in the morning Joe had three good-sized muskrats. The weather had been growing gradually colder and colder until parts of the stream and slough where the water was shallow were frozen solid, while in deep water there were from two to three feet of ice. There was a clear sweep for the wind down the west side of the slough from the river, so that the snow was swept away nearly as fast as it fell, leaving a clear view of the little brown huts of the muskrats which stood from a foot to three feet above the icy bottom.

Joe said if I would help him spear and trap the muskrats he would give me the money he procured for the skins. On an early December morning, as Joe and I started for the slough, he carried a two-pronged pitchfork for a spear and a hatchet. I wore my fur cap, that mother and Joe made for me from the rat he had killed in

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the summer pulled well down over my ears and had a string of steel traps over my shoulder. It was with much suppressed excitement that we walked noiselessly on tip-toe to a large hut, Joe whispering to me under his breath that he was looking for the frost-patch generally found on the outside of the hut caused by the animals' breathing. Ah! there it was and he crept closer with the handle of his spear held high above his head. Crash went the fork into the earth. And immediately after there was a muffled splash! splash! splash! as three muskrats scampered into the water! I crept up to Joe and whispered "didn't you catch him?" Just then I noticed that he was pushing down on the fork and as the handle swayed back and forth I used the hatchet to chop away the top of the hut and throw aside the earth. My eyes met the gaze of a large muskrat with two very small, wild eyes and his open mouth showing four long protruding teeth and with excitement and joy I fairly screamed, "Joe, Joe you've caught a rat." Then with one more chop the back of a second one loomed up. I threw down my hatchet saying "There are two, two

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Joe!" I held the fork while Joe killed the muskrats and set a trap in the hole we had made, for he knew the other rats would return in a short time and at once begin to repair their damaged home and that we were quite sure of getting another. I had felt the first thrilling excitement of capturing a wild animal. Not waiting for Joe, I ran to the next hut and thrust the fork into the mound. Soon I heard the animals scamper into the water. I had been too eager and noisy and they all escaped. This calmed me and I walked meekly by Joe's side, with the remaining traps over my shoulder and carrying the hatchet, without saying a word.

In nearly every hut we caught one or two muskrats. Once Joe pinned three. By noon we had speared eighteen. Joe said we would go back and examine the traps and we found ten more, in this way making twenty-eight in all. It was half past three when we sat down on an old cock of dry hay with the pile of muskrats in front of us. Joe took some sandwiches of rye bread and fried bacon out of his pocket for our lunch. I was tired and very hungry. How good the bread and meat tasted!

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I can remember eating nothing I enjoyed more. Now that the excitement had worn off I grew very unhappy when I thought I had aided in taking the lives of so many animals. Had they not as much right to enjoy their lives in their way as I had to enjoy mine? I would have given all I ever hoped to possess—even my dear pony and dog — could I have given back the luckless muskrats their lives and have seen them run here and there, down their many runways, tumbling over one another in their mad haste to reach their homes. Joe said I must not feel so about the rats, as he wiped the tears from my cheek with his red handkerchief. He said if they were not killed during the winter the muskrats would multiply very rapidly, having three litters and from five to nine young ones at a birth during a summer. In great numbers they are capable of doing much damage and he thought their fur was intended for our use, for were not his mittens and my cap of comfort and service to us? With this comforting argument Joe bagged the game and placed it on the hand-sled on which he had pulled me partly down to the slough. As we trudged

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up the hill to the house Joe promised me he would not molest the muskrats in the homes we had watched with so much pleasure during their progress of construction. In time I grew to think about as Joe did upon the subject, but I loved the wild animals too well to ever join in capturing them again. We received from fifteen to eighteen cents apiece for our twenty-eight skins according to their size and condition, making four dollars and sixty-five cents for our day's work.

With this money I purchased, with my mother's aid, my first books. During the remainder of the winter, when Joe was not trapping muskrats or other small game, we spent the time sitting on a bench behind the stove reading the books together.

## THE BEAVERS OF BEAVER CREEK

**J**UST below the foot-hills of the "Rockies" lived a plainsman with his Indian wife "Bright-Eyes" and their children. Near their home ran a stream of clear water. Along its banks grew many cottonwood trees, willows, alders and plum bushes. Around the trees gracefully twined wild cucumber, hop and grape vines with their long tendrils reaching from the branches of one tree to another, forming a beautiful bower among which both birds and beasts of the plains found welcome retreat. The creek, and the trees surrounding it, were the only ones to be seen for many miles on the undulating prairie, broken here and there with a deep cañon and its banks, during the summer months, covered with beds of beautiful wild roses.

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"Full Moon" was the eldest son of the plainsman and his wife Bright-Eyes. He received his name from the fact that he was born on the first night in a full moon and also from his habit of prowling about, at night generally when it was clear and the moon was bright. He frequented the creek and its wooded banks and the prairie to learn of the animals that lived there and to study their ways. It is the natural life of every Indian boy to live and learn the ways of nature's children. He received crude moral lessons through legends of nature's gifts which had been handed down from one generation to another.

The beavers had been hunted for the coats they wore by the fur-traders and Indians. After repeatedly having their homes and dams along the larger streams broken into and many of their families destroyed, they scattered and sought new localities along rivers and creeks and with renewed hopes built other dams and lodges. But they were followed again and again with the same disastrous experience. One brave beaver and his mate fortunately made good their escape when the last of their colony

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were entirely wiped out and their dam and lodge destroyed by a party of fur-hunters. They had lain concealed in an old, deserted, badger den until their ruthless enemies disappeared with their plunder. Then under the cover of a dark, rainy night they cautiously came forth and noiselessly glided down the stream and out into a strange world in search of a new home. After traveling a long distance they entered a broad, shallow creek that ran by Full Moon's home and that was ever after destined to bear their name. They traveled all the way by night examining first one stream and then another and rested during the day under friendly banks or in some deserted burrow which they chanced to find by the way. The weary animals swam for some distance along the creek and after carefully studying all the surroundings with due consideration they selected the portion of the stream near Full Moon's home for their future abode. During the first day they lay concealed under the bank and rested contentedly. When the moon was well up and all was quiet they came out and swam about the stream, then crawled up the



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bank and awkwardly made their way to a juicy cottonwood tree. They sat upon their hind feet before the chosen tree, with their hands clasped about the trunk and their broad tails extended behind as a prop. Then with their chisel-like teeth they began rapidly cutting a groove completely around the trunk. As the animals bit into the tree the groove was made proportionately wider so that when the timber was entirely severed the end was less rounded than rather pointed. The clean-cut chips fell thick and fast about the crude lumbermen's feet. When the tree was nearly cut through one of the beavers walked around it with a wise, anxious look in its bright eyes. When the animals had determined which way the tree would fall they went to the opposite side and with several powerful bites the wood was cut away so that the tree became unbalanced. Presently there was a crash; then another crash that echoed and reëchoed along the stream. The beavers had accomplished their self-appointed task and as the tree fell they scampered back into the water fearing that enemies might be attracted by the sound of the falling timber.

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Full Moon lay some distance down the stream, stretched upon the bank watching an owl catch a weasel for his midnight feast. He heard the crashing noise made by the falling tree and wondered if some one was stealing his father's timber. He arose and quietly crept along in his moccasin-covered feet in the direction whence the noise came. Presently he came to the stub of the tree-trunk which was on the edge of the bank with many chips scattered about. Across the stream lay the stately tree with its top branches far upon the opposite bank. But where was the lumberman thief? Full Moon was puzzled. He put his ear to the ground and listened; there was no sound of distant footsteps. Then he picked up some of the chips that lay near the tree and examined them closely with his sharp, black eyes by the light of the moon. He found a little ridge down the middle of the face of each chip as though the axe that made it had a deep notch in it. Next he carefully scrutinized the chips on the other side of the stump and found them similarly marked but the ridges were not so wide nor deep and the chips were too small to

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be made by a white man's axe. Each beaver leaves his own signature behind him; no two have teeth that make exactly the same marks upon the chips they cut. In this way the experienced trapper and Indian can tell if it were an old or young beaver who did the cutting work. Full Moon became more curious and bewildered as he looked about on the ground for footprints. Around the standing stub of the tree trunk he found large duck-like tracks and in several places the soft earth was pressed in somewhat the shape of a great spear-head with the point rounded. He bent low and sniffed the ground; a peculiar odor reached his nostrils that he had never smelled before and he knew it was that of some strange animal. He then followed the fresh tracks down to the bank of the stream where the beavers had entered the water. Full Moon sat long upon the bank and thought and thought about all the animals his grandfather, who was an Arapaho chief, had mentioned to him. He knew it was not a thief who felled the tree but the wonderful and highly prized beavers that the Great Spirit had sent to live near him. He ran home

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to tell his parents of his discovery and to ask his father if the now doubly attractive creek could not bear the name of the welcome newcomers.

It was a busy time for the beavers. They had their dam and lodge to build and food to gather for the long winter months when they would be locked in a home surrounded by ice and snow. Their busy little minds were not disturbed in their delightful new home by the presence of prowling fur-hunters with their cruel traps. So they were happy and worked the greater part of each night as only beavers can work.

Full Moon had now but one great ambition; the hope of seeing and knowing the ways of the wise little animals around whom so many beautiful legends are entwined. How often he had searched the streams and wished that the Great Spirit would send the highly prized beaver with his fat tail covered with lustrous, black, horny scales; the reddish-brown fur that made such warm caps and coats; the juicy flesh roasted in the skin after the hair had been removed by singeing. How often his mouth had watered

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at the thought of this delicious morsel that often constituted a part of his grandfather's feasts! And last, but not least, the highly prized castor—a musk-like fluid, secreted by the beaver and which they deposit upon little mounds of dirt filling the air of the whole neighborhood with its odor. This is the way they have of telling other beavers of their whereabouts. When a beaver smells this peculiar odor he becomes very much excited and at once makes for the spot when he covers it with dirt and deposits a new supply. Trappers frequently use it in baiting their traps. The Indians consider it a great food delicacy. Each male beaver is supplied with two small sacs containing this fluid. The Indians remove these highly prized sacs from the captured animals and put them in a shady place to dry. During the drying a gummy matter exudes through the sac. It is this gummy substance that the Indians delight to eat. The little bags of fat that are situated next to the sacs of castor have a very strong odor; the Indians use this fat to mix with tobacco and also sometimes as an article of food.

Just before dark Full Moon, with his boyish

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heart wildly beating with expectation, walked toward the creek. By the way he found a bed of wild tansy. He rubbed his moccasins well with the herb, then rolled over and over upon it so as to kill the human odor which the beaver with his keen sense of smell so readily detects. This accomplished, he crept along the bank of the creek until he came to a large cottonwood tree, up which he climbed and went out on one of its largest branches. There he lay flat along the big limb from which he could see up and down the stream and back some distance from its banks. Thus he waited. Presently he noticed a black spot in the water floating toward him. On and on it came. First he thought it was a muskrat, or musquash as he called it, but as it swam nearer he saw the animal was too large for that. It didn't swim like an otter and it was certainly not a mink. Could it be the beaver? The leaves from the branch above swayed in the breeze and slightly obstructed his view. He trembled with excitement and his heart beat so hard he feared the approaching animal might hear it! If he moved he was sure of being detected. Soon Nature acted more

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kindly toward him, as she always does if we only do our part and give her time. The leaves were blown in the other direction and there was the animal directly in front of him. The upper surface of its body moved up and down in the water in a curved line bringing a third of the total length above water at a time. When the animal passed by he saw its great, flat tail dragged behind motionless. He had seen the stranger at last! It was the beaver. He strained his eyes to get a better view while the animal unconsciously swam up stream and was joined by his companion. They were so nearly of a size and looked so much alike that Full Moon could not distinguish one from the other. When they reached a place where the bank was low and sloping they crawled up its side and walked awkwardly around among the trees, stopping now and then and raising themselves upon their hind legs to listen. Presently one of them selected a large willow tree and with a few cuts from their sharp, front teeth, which are from four to five inches in length, the beavers soon brought the tree to the ground. They began peeling off some of the bark for food. After

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they had finished their repast they proceeded to cut the timber into lengths that could be easily rolled to the bank and into the water to float down stream, to the spot selected for their dam the night before. The site chosen was where they cut the tree that, fortunately for the beavers, grew on the edge of the bank—and the noise of the fall of which led to their discovery by Full Moon. These wise little animals are economic engineers and never fail to accept the aid that nature throws in their way. So finding the tree where the surroundings were most suitable they saved much time and labor by cutting it so that it fell across the stream, to act as a foundation for the now rapidly growing dam. After Full Moon left them on that first eventful night that marked the beginning of the foundation of the first dam built by the beavers of Beaver Creek, the busy, little animals cut off the top of the tree and pulled it to one side. Then they bit off all the branches from the under side of the trunk so that the tree could settle to the desired height to form the top of the dam. Next, they trimmed the upper branches close to the trunk and used them to



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weave into the long stubs that extended down from the trunk into the mud at the bottom of the stream. Then the brush from the top of the tree was pulled down against the water side of the structure and covered with mud, carried between the fore paws and chin, to fill in the chinks and small stones to hold it down; the dam now began to take on a substantial aspect. Nearly all night for many a week nature's little lumbermen felled the trees and floated them down stream or carried branches in their mouths, thrown across their shoulders and trailing behind upon the water if the limb was of a bushy nature and small enough to handle in this way. This wonderful progress went on before Full Moon's astonished eyes as he lay night after night, motionless upon the branch of the great cottonwood tree with his limbs stiffened and benumbed with cold. Once Full Moon could endure the cold no longer and moved to rest his aching legs a little. In an instant one of the animals, who saw him when he made the unfortunate move, threw the hind part of its body out of the water as it descended headforemost and brought its trowel-like tail down upon the



*“The dam now began to take on a substantial aspect”*



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surface and deep below it, with a heavy stroke, causing a sound like the report of a pistol that rang out on the stillness of the night and caused even the heart of the brave Indian boy to quake. At the same time the force of the blow upon the water threw a spray several feet high and the signal of alarm could be distinctly heard for a half mile or more along the stream. Full Moon slid down the tree trunk with stiffened limbs and walked homeward. He had actually spent many nights with the beavers and watched them at their work. In a surprisingly short time when the workers are considered the dam was completed. Near the crest the wonderful structure was made porous so that the water could filter through; thus the wise little engineers were able to keep the water in their yard at a uniform height. With the exception of the porous strip near the top of the dam the entire water front was plastered solidly with mud. The beavers had completed one of the most important structures for their safety. From ten to fifteen feet of water is an absolute necessity for the surroundings of a beaver's winter home. There are a number of other ways in which beavers

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build dams. They all depend on the nature of the stream and the materials surrounding it.

The creek had changed its course somewhat during the freshet of the previous spring making a deep bend. When the water rose from the dam it fell back to the east and around the little plot of ground at the bend making a miniature island upon which the beavers built their winter home, or lodge as it is called. First they dug two long passages from the island far out into deep water. One was to be used as a family entrance and the other to bring in food. Upon the opening of the two subaqueous channels they built, or rather threw together, a rude shaped structure composed of brush, logs and great masses of mud and small stones. The first winter the beavers built a modest home some twelve feet across and seven feet high; it was made high as a precaution against the early spring freshets that are so destructive and so characteristic of all western streams. They didn't need a massive structure for there were only two of them to house and, being sensible animals, they cared nothing for show but endeavored to be comfortable and get the most

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out of life at the least possible expense. There was but one living room in their winter castle as in that of all beavers. The walls were over five feet thick. The only ventilation was through the porous material of the structure near the top of the lodge and through which the animals received all the fresh air they breathed. It would not have been enough to keep you and I alive but it was quite sufficient for the little furry occupants. The floor of the room was covered with brush and plastered smooth and hard with mud. The outside was finished with sticks, slough grass and mud. On the whole it was not very decorative but satisfactorily answered the purpose for which it was intended. It defied the sharp claws of any four-footed enemies and even man's axe would find it hard to break through. The wise little beavers, housed snugly in their strong fortification, whiled the weary winter months away in one long, jolly vacation, darting here and there among the fishes and other water neighbors, pulling up a rush or green water-plant for their noonday salad, all unseen and protected by the icy canopy above.

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But before they went into this winter residence and beaver luxury there was many a busy night's work to accomplish — for even beavers, like all other animals including man, must work or in some way compensate for the luxuries they receive.

On the opposite shore where the bank was high they dug a long burrow starting under water and digging back and up into the bank for ten or twelve feet terminating it under the roots of an old cottonwood tree. This burrow they would use as a home in summer and for a place of refuge in winter should their lodge be broken into or otherwise meet with accident. The last hard task before the icy gates closed them within these walls and one which kept them busy for some time was laying in the supply of wood the bark of which was to serve for food during the long winter months. Then all the beaver needs to do when he feels hungry is to crawl down the subaqueous passage to the store-house in his watery yard, select the stick that best suits his fancy, carry it through the hall made for that purpose and sit in his lodge and feast. As the bark is peeled from the tim-

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bers they are laid neatly to one side for future use in repairing the dam or adding to its strength. The beaver stands forth in the animal world as a neat, cleanly and systematic, four-footed citizen.

Full Moon often visited the lodge during the winter, while on his hunting rambles, and enjoyed many a whiff of the beaver's odor that penetrated through the top of the dome-shaped structure. He was waiting for the time when the family should increase so he could claim some of them as his own. When spring came and unlocked the icy gates and frosty nooks, the beavers left their winter lodge and took up their home in the burrow under the opposite bank and the old cottonwood tree. During the month of May the master of the beaver home was often seen lazily floating about on the water or sunning himself upon the bank. Later his mate appeared with four cunning little beavers, with wonderment in their small eyes as they first beheld the great world surface about them. How light and strange and big it all seemed and how little they knew of what it would all mean to them even in their little beaver world.



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Strength to gain lessons, to learn disappointment, to encounter difficulties, and success and pleasures to enjoy were yet to be theirs. Life even to a little beaver would not be complete without them all and one could not truly be appreciated without the other. It was now made plain why the head of the family had been seen roaming about alone. His mate had preferred attending to her motherly family duties without the aid or interference of her companion. So he made the most of the situation and enjoyed himself as best he might in true beaver fashion.

The beavers, through not being molested, lost much of their shyness and could often be seen floating and playing about on the water or diving gracefully, without the usual signal of danger; they were often in for a race or might be seen to bite and play with one another. The young beavers looked very cunning when seen sitting upon a stump or log with their tails swung around by their sides in cat fashion but with the lower surface uppermost and the root of a water-lily or a piece of bark held in their hands and the head bent slightly to meet the

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short paws as they daintily nibbled away at their lunch.

After whiling away the pleasant summer and successfully escaping their enemies without the loss of a single member of their family the happy little lumbermen went in company with their young, who were to receive their first lessons in the arts of a beaver and began repairing their dam and enlarging their winter home to accommodate the thrice increased numbers in their family. This was accomplished by adding more material to the outside and digging out the inside to the required size. Then there was a much larger food supply to be stored away — but in due time all was accomplished and they were again locked in out of harm's reach for the second winter in their home on Beaver Creek. Full Moon lost none of his interest in these industrious furry neighbors who "worked while they worked and played while they played." It was from his lips after he was a grown man, living in the small town situated upon the banks of the stream near the old beaver dam, that he told me the history of the beavers of Beaver Creek

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—as I am now relating it for the benefit of my readers.

The following spring there were six more little beavers added to the family. In the fall the lodge was made still larger to accommodate the increase. As time passed they had their ups and downs as do all well regulated families. Several of their number lost their lives either through being made a meal by their enemy, the otter, who made his home in the neighborhood or through being caught in Full Moon's steel trap. The third summer there were two new lodges built not far from the parent one. The first litter of young had left the parent's roof for ones of their own and built by their own efforts. Each family gathered its own food supply and would rather starve than borrow or steal from a neighbor, and each dug its own family burrow for summer use. But the dam was repaired and looked after by the entire colony. The following year there was another dam built below the first one by the members who left the parent lodge that summer and the watery city of mounds continued to grow.

During the summer two men, an Indian and

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a white man, chanced to pass that way and discovered the beaver colony, unknown to Full Moon, who claimed full possession of the coveted animals by right of his father owning the claim along the portion of the creek upon which the beaver homes were built. The men set their traps and passed on up the stream intending to return the following day. Just before dawn Full Moon heard a pitiful, wailing noise like the cry of a little human babe in distress. He arose and followed in the direction whence the pleading wails came. When he neared the creek the sight that greeted his eyes stirred even the heart of the Indian boy. There on the bank sat two little beavers crying for their mother, who was caught in one of the strange hunters' traps and while thus held helpless had been torn to pieces by her enemy, the wild cat. The tracks about the trap led to the identification of the murderous thief. The victim proved to be the mate of the pioneer couple who first laid the foundation of the now thriving beaver town. Long had they lived together and many were the struggles and hardships his faithful companion had shared with him and many a

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narrow escape from death had they made together and at last she was ruthlessly taken from him. His heart was broken; he left his home and refused to be comforted, like a human being. The remainder of his life he spent in solitude in a hermit's den, under the bank, some distance up the stream and away from the scenes of his loves and joyful earlier life. At last old, heart-broken and discouraged he carelessly stepped into a trap set for that purpose and thus was ended his now wretched life.

Full Moon had taken the little beavers that were about the size of a house-cat home with him. In a brief time they became very tame, would eat vegetables, peeling the potatoes and carrots into strips with their front teeth, treating thus all food served for the family meal. They followed Full Moon about like little dogs and answered, when called, by coming to him often walking on their hind feet and balancing themselves with their tails. They were always very cleanly and showed great affection for their master. Once, while he was away for several days, when they missed him, they walked about the room uttering groans and would not be

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entirely pacified until he returned. Then they stood on their hind legs, crawled upon his lap and in true beaver fashion showed their affection for him and their pleasure at his presence.

Full Moon showed me a beaver skin that he kept as a memento of one of the little animals that lived with him for more than seven years as a household pet. As he held forth the hind foot he said: "My people have a very pretty legend in reference to the peculiar, characteristic, double nail on the beaver's second toe which looks, as you see, as if the toe had been split." This is the legend: "Many, many years ago there lived a brave old warrior named Bear Voice. His tribe had been greatly weakened by their enemies who had continually waged war against them. They were driven far out on the plains and away from the course taken by the great buffalo herds. They were reduced to poverty and almost to starvation. They had long been calling to the Great Spirit for food without an answer. Bear Voice entered his tent very hungry. He called to his favorite squaw to bring his tobacco pouch. When he had smoked his pipe he went forth to search

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for food. On the banks of a stream he found a beaver lodge. He entered and asked the master beaver for something to eat. The beaver was grieved for he had nothing for Bear Voice to eat. One of the little beavers said, 'Father, kill me and let the brave warrior eat me that he may not starve!' The father beaver consented upon one condition—Bear Voice was not to bite into any of the bones. The little beaver with his soft, silky fur was killed and the great warrior feasted. While eating the meat from the hind foot he accidentally bit into the bone of the second toe, all unnoticed by his beaver host. When Bear Voice had finished, the father beaver put all the bones of his late little son into the skin and threw it into the water. Immediately the self-sacrificed little beaver came to life and swam back to the lodge. When his father saw him he said, 'Are you all right, my son?' He answered, 'Yes father, save the second toe on my hind foot; he bit into that and it is split.' Ever after the beavers have had the double nail."

As years passed by the beaver city slowly increased but in time the inhabitants were all trapped and the dams and lodges broken down.

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All that remains to mark the memory of the once prosperous city of dome-shaped lodges and dams is the name of the creek and the little town upon its bank. But the proceeds from the pelts of the thousands and thousands of others of this wise and ancient family have been the foundation of the wealth that built some of the finest buildings in the great metropolis, erected not by nature's simple builders, but by the master hand and mind of man.



## MONGOLA AND HIS TWO BROTHERS

**S**HORTLY after six o'clock on a pleasant evening in the latter part of June, I was returning home on horseback from a neighborhood visit. As my pony loped around the hill I heard an excited voice shout several times, in French, "Les enfants du diable," which means "the child of the devil," or in other words, the devil's own beast. At the same time my nostrils were greeted with a stifling odor that grew stronger and more offensive as I approached the source whence it came.

A short distance up the hill stood an old French trapper and his half-breed son. Before them on the ground lay two skunks limp and lifeless. It was these beautiful little animals that had brought the excited exclamation from the old Frenchman as they discharged their

## MONGOLA AND HIS BROTHERS

acid-like fluid with its pungent odor, which is their only means of defence.

After killing the parent animals the trapper and his son turned their attention to the skunk's burrow. With my handkerchief held to my nose I rode within a few feet of the poor creatures who had just lost their useful lives. Dismounting, I stood with my bridle-strap over my arm in rapt admiration as the trapper unearthed five little black and white kitten-like skunks, four to five inches long. They were huddled together in a round ball of fur upon a bed of dry grass.

The trapper looked at me with a merry twinkle in his eye and said, "you want some"? I was delighted and at once held out my empty lunch-basket in which to receive them. His son, who had lived with us and had been my companion on many a long ramble over the plains, thought more kindly and told me to leave my basket and go away for a little while. During my absence he removed the scent-glands from three of the little skunks. He then lined the basket with some soft grass and into it tucked the three harmless creatures.

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The anal scent-glands of these interesting animals are both offensive and defensive organs but their secretion is never distributed except under impulse of fear or for protection. If not disturbed or needlessly alarmed the peculiar odor of these animals is not made manifest. They share this musk-secreting power with many animals, but theirs is most peculiar and penetrating.

I rode slowly homeward, holding the basket so as not to greatly jar my highly prized gifts. On reaching home I put my newly found pets into a wooden box lined with soft hay and placed it in one corner of our granary. For several days the skunks seemed weak as a result of having their scent-glands removed. I could not coax them to eat and so, on the second day, I opened their mouths and fed milk to them with a spoon. In a short time, however, they recovered and became very playful and tame. They would follow me around the yard and garden like puppies, eating grasshoppers and other harmful insects that chanced to cross their paths.

The larger of the three I named Mongola,

## MONGOLA AND HIS BROTHERS

for his eyes seemed to be placed more obliquely than those of the others, thus reminding me of a Chinaman. The hairs in his tail stood out and fell loosely in all directions when it was raised, like the beautiful plumes of a pompon. His head was cone-shaped, with a long pointed nose and little ears, that were almost entirely hidden in the fur. A streak of white extended along the center of the front of his head, broadening into a wide patch back of his ears. From this patch it extended downward in a strip along each side of the animal to the base of his tail. With the exception of this white trimming and the underpart of the tail and its tip Mongola was dressed in glossy black hair.

The second one I called Cannibal. He was the first to eat some live grasshoppers I put into the box to tempt their dainty appetites. The third was called Snip, for he was smaller and seemingly more backward than the others.

Cannibal and Snip were marked similarly to Mongola, except that the white fur of their coats was more prominent and the hairs on their tails stood out on each side only when they raised them gracefully above their black

## ALONG FOUR-FOOTED TRAILS

backs. The front of little Snip's head was nearly all white and the white patch extended well out on his shoulders. The color markings of these animals follow a general and well-defined scheme, but there are interesting variations.

Before they were able to climb out of their home they would stand on their hind legs as I approached the box. If I did not notice them they would stamp their feet and chatter at me in such a knowing way, as much to say, "we want to get out and find our own food." When I put my hand down into the box, one by one they would crawl up my arm to my shoulder and wait for me to place them on the ground. Then they would scamper along, each one endeavoring to walk nearer my feet than the other, until one spied a grasshopper or a beetle, and away they would trot in the daintiest possible way and never notice me again until they had eaten every insect they could discover. The food of these animals includes large numbers of insects which renders them of economic importance to farmers. On one of these rambles, Snip undertook to eat a large stag-beetle.

## MONGOLA AND HIS BROTHERS

The beetle pinched his nose! It was very funny to watch him as he shook it off, but each time he struck at the beetle it struck back giving him many a sharp nip. Snip, however, was game and at last crushed the horny covering of the insect and devoured it with a little grunt of satisfaction greatly to the admiration of his brothers and myself. Others than skunks have a similar grunting habit when they eat!

It was early in September, before the grain had been threshed and placed in the granary. Late one afternoon I sat on the floor with my pets. Mongola was perched on my shoulder, amusing himself by trying to pull out a paste-board slat from an opening in my calico sun-bonnet that hung by its strings from my neck. Snip lay in my lap asleep, while Cannibal, who was possessed of more than his share of curiosity, was making his way into a bag partly filled with corn, seeking to learn its contents. Presently a tiny little mouse crept out from a hole near-by. He looked cautiously around, then crept slowly toward some golden grains of wheat that lay scattered on the granary floor. As soon as Mongola saw the mouse, he dropped

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the slat from my bonnet, which he was tearing into small pieces and sat up with his attention centered upon the timid little creature. It seemed as though his heart had stopped beating, he sat so still and motionless, with his sharp little eyes watching every movement of the mouse. The mouse stopped, sniffed the air and waved her whiskers as she turned her head from side to side. As Mongola and I were perfectly motionless she saw nothing that seemed dangerous to her. So she again directed her attention to the bountiful meal that was spread before her, crept nearer and began to nibble the grains of wheat. As she moved from kernel to kernel her back was turned toward us. Mongola grasped the opportunity and quietly slid down from my shoulder. He stood for a moment on the corner of my apron, then quietly tiptoed across the floor in a dainty, mincing manner. When he was within reach of the mouse he rose on his hind legs, sprang in an instant upon the quivering little creature and grasped it between his paws. A pitiful squeak from the captured mouse and a growl from Mongola brought Snip and the all-curious

## MONGOLA AND HIS BROTHERS

Cannibal to his side. He backed off, holding the mouse firmly between his teeth, growled and stamped his feet whenever his less favored brothers or even I approached too near. In the meantime he devoured the little creature in a most ferocious way. From that day on the skunks proved themselves valuable pets by keeping the granary and house free from mice.

It was some time before my dog became reconciled to the dainty little brutes that demanded so much of my attention. Several times I was obliged to scold and punish him for worrying them. One morning late in October the dog was stretched out at full length before the kitchen door taking his morning sun-bath. I was feeding the chickens in the yard when I noticed Cannibal crawl out from under the wood-shed and walk toward the dog. Every few feet he would stop and look at him. The long, black object did not move and he came closer. Soon he was within a foot of him. The dog moved his ear to throw off a lingering fly. In an instant Cannibal's tail was raised and he stepped back several feet, never taking his eyes from the flap of the dog's ear that had



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alarmed him. His curiosity was aroused and at last overcame his fear and better judgment. He crept back to the object of attraction and made bold enough to stick the end of his nose into the dog's ear. The dog thus rudely awakened grabbed the curious little beast by the back of his neck and soundly shook him. When the dog saw me he dropped my thoroughly frightened pet and walked away in a most disgusted manner. Ever afterwards he treated the three little pets as he did the cat, never even deigning to notice them.

The following week the winter supply of soap was made in a great iron kettle, hung over an open fire in the yard. In the afternoon I shut the skunks into the granary, for I feared they would be attracted by the scraps of meat used in making the soap. At night the contents of the great iron kettle were turned into tubs to cool and harden. The next morning when I went to the granary to release my pets Cannibal was nowhere to be found.

Just above the oat-bin a little door had been left open. Through this opening Cannibal must have escaped. With Mongola and Snip

## MONGOLA AND HIS BROTHERS

I searched everywhere, but without avail. At last some one suggested the shed in which the newly made soap was placed. I rushed there trembling with fear. When I opened the door the first thing I saw was poor unfortunate Cannibal, with his eyes turned upward in the center of one of the largest tubs, held in a solid vise of soap. My curious, mischievous little pet had lost his life through his one great weakness, indiscreet curiosity that had so often brought him to grief in his short but eventful life.

Near the close of the following month we had a light snow-storm. At night, while attending to my usual tasks, I noticed the tracks of a fox along the road and up the hillside. I closed the hen-house with more than usual care that night, but seeing nothing of the fox I dismissed him from my mind. The following evening as I sat by the window watching the beautiful sunset above the white, snow-covered hills I noticed Mongola and Snip playing in the snow near the window. They ran after each other, cuffed one another's ears and rolled over like two kittens in play. Presently they stopped,

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raised their tails and backed off in alarm. There stood a great red fox within a few feet of them. Snip was between Mongola and their cunning enemy. I rushed to their rescue, but as I stepped from the door the fox grabbed poor little Snip and made off with him. The fox seemed to laugh at my frantic efforts and grief. He stopped and looked back with poor little Snip dangling from his mouth as he held him firmly by the neck which he had crushed between his jaws. Then off he galloped with long leaps and was soon lost to view. As he disappeared behind the hill the brilliant sunset was hidden by a gray cloud that had floated between earth and sky as though in sympathy with me. I turned in despair and clasped little Mongola in my arms and wept. It was too cruel; within six weeks time two of my useful little pets had been taken from me! Poor lonely Mongola stuck his nose against my neck, then raised his little face to mine and licked my cheek in silent, brute sympathy.

Mongola was now full grown and about the size of our house-cat. His hind-quarters were much the heavier, giving to his back a graceful

## MONGOLA AND HIS BROTHERS

broad arch. Since the loss of his companions he became very dear to me and seldom left my side of an evening when I was at home. Skunks are nocturnal animals and spend most of the day in sleep. I made a little willow basket for Mongola to sleep in and placed an old feather cushion in it for a bed. One Sunday evening, while entertaining the Methodist circuit preacher in our house, we were disturbed at tea, in the midst of an interesting experience which our good-natured guest was relating, by seeing feathers flying in all directions, lighting on our hair, floating in our tea and resting on the butter and jam! Mongola had torn open the feather cushion to satisfy his curiosity and his head and paw had become entangled in the cover. He tossed the pillow frantically about in an attempt to free himself. Round and round he turned scattering the feathers about, greatly to the discomfort of my mother and the merriment of the preacher. I left the table to release the skunk and thus prevent the room from being covered with the remainder of the feathers. Mongola disappeared under the indignant gaze of my mother and the threats of my father. When I went to

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bed that night I found the little brute curled snugly under my pillow. Here and there was a white feather sticking to his shaggy hair, giving him a most comical appearance.

In the early morning Mongola would climb up the stairs to my room and crawl upon my bed. If I pretended to be asleep he would nip my ear or pull my hair until I noticed him. At other times he would root his way under the covers and nestle in my arms. He was too mischievous to remain quiet for any length of time. As soon as I was dressed he would climb upon my shoulder to be carried downstairs again.

One night I was awakened by a noise in the pantry below. Crash after crash rang up through the hole in the floor that was intended for a stove-pipe. Another crash, then a thump followed, a growl from Mongola and a sharp little squeak. Then all was quiet. Presently the familiar thump, thump, thump of Mongola's cushioned paws ascending the stairs and pattering across the floor to my bed. I could see quite plainly as the light from the full moon came in at the window. How strange Mongola

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looked! His hairs all seemed stuck to one another and smoothly plastered down. His tail was covered in the same way and he left a brown streak on the floor. He climbed upon the bed and the white bedspread was spotted and daubed as he crawled over it and looked at me with his little black eyes. He touched my hand with his nose which was sticky and I found that his body was covered with sorghum. It was all plain to me now. A poaching mouse in the pantry had claimed the attention of Mongola. When he had caught it on the pantry shelf he had overturned a jar of home-made molasses or sorghum, so well known to the western farmers. The noise that awakened me was caused by the breaking of the jar and other dishes that chanced to be in its way as it fell. It took several days to get Mongola clean — he was already sweet. A number of baths were required before I was able to entirely free his hair of the sticky sorghum.

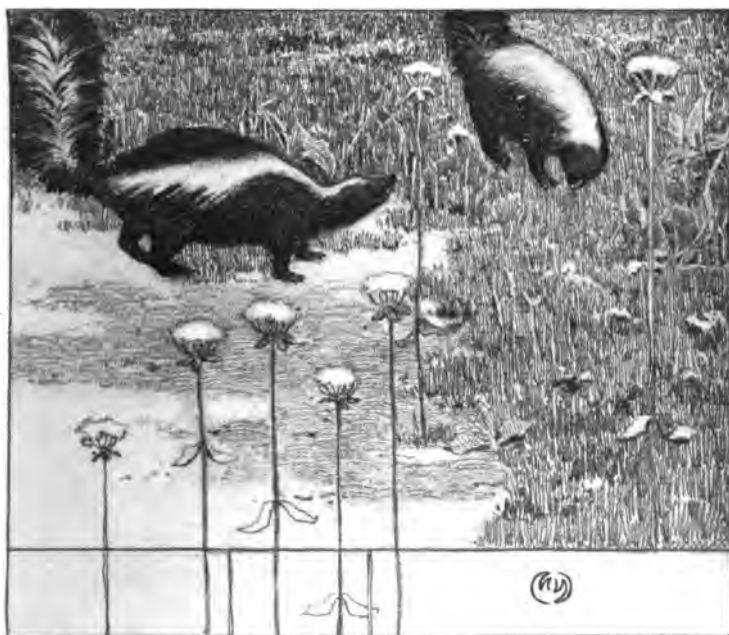
The winter passed. Mongola was forever getting under some one's feet or into some mischief and I had no little difficulty in excusing him. I was constantly begging for his pardon

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and holding forth his leading virtue, that of ridding the house of mice and insects.

When Mongola was a year old I felt he must be lonely without a mate. So after petting him for a long time I considered that if I truly loved him, I ought to be willing to lose the pleasure my pet afforded me, as it would doubtless be for his advantage if he were among his own kind. This it seemed should give him greater happiness and was certainly his natural right.

One morning in June I took him for a long walk beside the edge of a slough in the hope of meeting one of his wild neighbors. If I walked too fast he grew angry and turned back, but if he chose to take the lead he seemed to consider it quite a different thing and expected me to follow. Presently he put his nose to the ground, turned and looked at me, then scampered off into the long slough grass. I followed the wave on the surface of the grass, caused by his body as he passed beneath it. A field-sparrow flew above my head and circled directly over Mongola uttering her plaintive alarm chirps. I knew the little beast had discovered the bird's nest, so I ran to prevent him from eating the



*“He walked toward her, his bushy tail held up”*





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eggs or the young. There was the round nest on the ground, deftly woven of grass and stems and within it were three little birds, one of which Mongola had secured before I could reach him.

Poor Mongola could not understand why he had so grieved me. He was only employing his natural instinct in securing the tender little bird-morsel from the bird-home. I felt so sorry for the bird mother. I took Mongola home, forgetting all about the mission upon which I had started. One evening in the latter part of the same week Mongola went with me to the meadow to "picket" my pony for the night; as I was driving the wooden picket-pin into the earth I noticed a strange little skunk but a few feet in front of me with her tail held high over her back, apparently much interested in what I was doing. As soon as Mongola discovered the presence of the pretty creature he walked toward her, his bushy tail held up, with each hair falling gracefully before the evening breeze. When he was within reach of her he touched her nose with his and then proceeded to walk around her. She backed off and looked at him, uttered a low growl and

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walked away. Mongola followed. She increased her speed and he still followed her. How my heart beat! My first impulse was to run after him. For I had not realized until then what it would really mean to lose this playful little pet. I was determined, however, to let him go, for I felt it was right at any cost to myself to give the little fellow his liberty if he wished it. As the skunks disappeared in the tall grass, I turned to my pony and laid my head on his neck for comfort. I stood thus thinking and mourning my loss. Presently I felt a tiny little jerk at my dress. There stood Mongola on his hind feet, scratching at the hem of my skirt to attract my attention! He looked up at me with his earnest little eyes and seemed to say—"I have come back, don't you want me?" Dear Mongola! He loved me best, better than the wild freedom of the prairie and the companionship of his own kind. How I loved him! How glad I was to think I had unselfishly offered him his freedom! I grabbed the little animal and showered him with kisses, then set him on the back of my pony and stood off to admire them together. It was true the

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little beast knew no other life but that of a household pet and really did but the natural thing to return to me at this time of the year, since it was past the mating season. But no one could have persuaded me to believe that he had not made the sacrifice for me.

Skunks as a rule are very fond of chickens. I never knew of Mongola molesting any of ours, but I always took care to keep him away from the hens while with their young broods.

In the fall Mongola was killed by a strange dog belonging to one of our neighbors. I was thus robbed of my pet, but not of the sweet memories of our delightful companionship.

## PRAIRIE POCKET-GOPHERS

**I**T was before that part of the country was settled by the white man, when the red man of the plains roamed in happy freedom over his rightful domain. He never molested the gophers or even noticed their coming or going, for they were neither of benefit nor hindrance to his happiness or manner of living.

A young gopher left his parental burrow and entered upon his career as a hermit and a miner. He dug an avenue off from the old home, but not finding many tubers or tender roots he independently sought a new locality. One evening at sundown he came above ground and started across the meadow to the long hill-side, where grew the bunch-grass and a goodly number of tuberous sunflower plants. He silently took up his claim near the foot of the

## PRAIRIE POCKET-GOPHERS

hill and began to throw up hillocks of dirt which was a warning that no other four-footed miner should trespass upon his domain. All night he worked and in the morning there were a dozen little mounds to demonstrate his industry. He dug avenues, six to ten inches deep and a number of feet long, in several directions. He did not have a set plan, how or where he would dig, but determined his course by the conditions he found. If he chanced to find a tender plant-root he followed that up and dug a hall to his underground mansion in that direction. If it were a stone he struck he would at once change his course and mine a more feasible route. His favorite surroundings were loose mellow soils, where he would throw the dirt rapidly over his smooth, sleek body, as he pushed it back with his fore-paws, this being one of his chief sports and the only time he ever had an amiable frame of mind—if it be just to apply the term mind to his slight mental equipment.

Off from the main channel or hall he dug a room some three feet across and considerably deeper than the other avenues. This he used

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as a store-room in which to place food for use when the ground was frozen in winter, or for an emergency when he might not be fortunate in his daily search for food. One of his worst failings was his gluttonous disposition. On discovering a rare delicacy according to the gopher's cultivated taste, he would sit and eat and eat until his sides fairly stuck out and his stomach could not contain another mouthful. He would then work the remainder of the night cutting the tender shoots, roots, or tubers, whichever it chanced to be, into short pieces about an inch in length. In the most serious, business-like manner, he would sit up with his fore-paws and using first one and then the other he would place the pieces cut by his broad, long and sharp front teeth into the pockets on either side of his head. It was from these fur-lined pockets, or pouches, that the queer, solitary little animals derived their name. If he found a particularly choice bit of food, he would fill his pockets as full as he could stuff them, thus distorting the shape of his head, and causing him to look very queerly as he scampered along in the moonlight to his burrow, to

## PRAIRIE POCKET-GOPHERS

put away in his store-room the contents of his pouches.

In the course of time a number of these four-footed miners staked their claims upon the same long hillside that gradually sloped into a broad, level stretch of prairie. They were solitary, vicious hermits and never entered one another's homes, or in any way exchanged friendly greetings. If by accident they chanced to meet their only recognition was to angrily spring at each other and bite. If unfortunately they both were males, there at once ensued a deadly combat in which one, or more often both of them, suffered death.

Each hermit stakes his or her underground claim by digging a tunnel and throwing out the dirt in low mounds on the surface at frequent intervals. This is accomplished by the little animal loosening the dirt with his nose. At the same time he eats any roots he may find pushing their way through the earth in search of nourishment and a foundation for the parent plant above.

It is only for roots and tubers that these energetic four-footed hermits mine. As fast as



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the earth is loosened along the tunnel the animal shovels it back with his long, curved fore-paws; then as he moves along over the dirt, he pushes it back again for some distance with his powerful and muscular hind-feet; when a small quantity of earth has been pushed behind the miner he turns about and joins his fore-paws before his nose, forming thus a kind of scoop. Then by pushing himself forward with his hind-feet he shoves the dirt before him out of the newly made hall of his underground home. Thus he carries the dirt for a distance of three or four feet; then he makes a new opening through which he throws the loose dirt so rapidly excavated from his tunnel. In this way he always stakes his claim with fresh hillocks, or mounds, as he mines and explores new underground regions.

The gopher is both fearless and independent, never seeming to care whether it be friend or foe who knows his whereabouts. The little mounds are always pushed up in the same way without any attempt to disguise their freshness. If he is met above ground while away from home, he will attack any animal that chances to



*"If by accident they chanced to meet  
their only recognition was to angri-  
ly spring at each other and bite"*



## PRAIRIE POCKET-GOPHERS

cross his path, even man, in the most ferocious manner and often without the least provocation. He will fight, striking and inflicting deep wounds with his long, sharp teeth, until either he kills or is killed.

These savage little hermits have stout, compact bodies covered with thick, soft, silky fur of a beautiful rich brown color, which takes on a reddish or purplish reflection when exposed to the sunshine. The feet and lower lip are covered with pure white hair. The tail is also white. The hairs are very fine and lay so closely and smoothly together that they repel the dirt, leaving the coat of the animal, who always seeks darkness and grovels in the dirt, clean, bright and glossy. The head is broad and flat, with small ears and little, expressionless eyes. The fore-feet have long, sharp claws, with stiff bristles growing out between the fingers to prevent the dirt from slipping through as the animal digs the many chambers in his underground mansion. These prairie pocket-gophers are neither graceful, intelligent nor amiable animals; but what can be expected of a creature who has lived in solitude and darkness

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for generations, with but one ambition, to eat and store away food? They never give or receive a kind act from one another, never have their natures softened by true friendship or loving companions. Their eyes as well as their natures are small and weak. Gophers seek nothing but the underground halls and galleries running in all directions, except it be the stores of food, packed away in the large chambers which they excavate for that purpose and which are generally more than they can possibly use. They shun the sunlight in which so many of their prairie neighbors bask and thoroughly enjoy. They seek the darkest recesses of their homes for rest and repose and work diligently to exclude any stray ray of light that might by accident enter one of their halls. Gloomy, solitary and vicious, this underground dweller and lover of darkness spends his life and fills his mission in fertilizing the more or less barren hillsides of the prairie, changing in some slight degree the surface of the earth, through the action of the rain upon their discarded homes. In time they often cause deep ruts and gullies and in many ways are both a hindrance as

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well as a benefit to the farmer in his westward progress.

The gopher feels himself quite secure in his dark, cheerless home, in spite of his solitary method of living and his precaution to always cover all entrances to his underground house; and this, by the way, is more to keep out the sunlight than to exclude enemies. He has two natural enemies who break through his walls, seek him and capture him in his own dungeon. One of these is the weasel and the other the bull-snake. Both of these enemies are accustomed to the underground world and to homes of darkness. The wiry little weasel, with its long, slender body, enters the last wall or burrow of the hermit, then glides along quietly until it reaches and surprises the solitary occupant in his cold, dark chamber. It soon sucks the life-blood of the pugnacious miner, who thus taken at a disadvantage, is unable to defend and save himself. In such a case there are no more new galleries or fresh mounds thrown up by the late occupant of that special claim, during that night or ever after. There are no companions or loved ones to tell of his

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struggle or tragic end. Not even his own offspring remain, for each has selfishly left the parental home at a very early age and entered upon his own solitary life. So the gopher leaves none to mourn or to miss him. He has filled his mission on earth and accomplished the only work that a gopher could do.

If it chanced to be his other enemy, the bull-snake would glide with his cold, muscular body along the unfortunate gopher's chamber and capturing, squeeze him to death and swallow him entire.

When the gopher thrusts his head above ground, there are other natural enemies who sit and wait to devour him. Among them are the fox and coyote who seize many a luckless one as he pushes up his load of dirt and by chance stops for a moment to rest with his head above ground. The cunning fox or coyote, knowing the gopher's habits, will sit at eventide at the entrance of the newly formed hillocks and wait for the unsuspecting occupant to come forth with its load of dirt, when it is instantly caught, pulled above ground and soon hangs dangling limp and lifeless between the jaws of its enemy.

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Woe be to the inexperienced young fox or coyote who would grasp the animal anywhere save by the back of its neck, as he would then give the vicious little gopher an opportunity to use his long, cruel teeth! The story would in such a case have quite a different ending; the fox or coyote dropping his prey and retreating with howls from painful wounds, instead of trotting off triumphantly, with a tender, juicy supper dangling from its mouth. Two other enemies the gophers have to fear, and these are our feathered friends, the owl and the hawk. The owls in particular, being night-prowlers, bring many an unfortunate gopher to an untimely end.

In the course of years a frontiersman came and staked off his claim or homestead, which took in the hill and level stretch of prairie that was occupied by the gophers. As soon as the farmer was settled in his dugout, he began gradually to turn the prairie into ploughed land; to plant vegetables and trees; to sow his fields of grain. The first year he planted a portion of newly broken sod with watermelons; and another strip with corn, cucumbers, and



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pumpkins. The plainsman wondered that so many of the hills of corn failed to take root and grow. He also noticed the increasing number of gopher hills but gave little thought that they would seriously damage his crops. The gophers were quick to take advantage of the new conditions that arose on the border of their claims. They soon mined along and discovered the grains of corn in many a corn-hill. In the fall much was made clear to the unsophisticated farmer and vengeance was sworn against the luckless gophers of his locality. They had lived in luxury from a gopher's point of view and flourished with comparatively few attacks, even from their natural enemies. With their greed for more riches in the way of good things to eat and greater stores to pack away only to rot and waste, they had trespassed upon the rights of the farmer and thus encountered greater danger to life; dangers and struggles they had never before known.

When the farmer undertook, in the fall, to gather his crop of water-melons over one half of the melons were found eaten from the under side by his damaging little neighbors. The only way

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these little animals are known to take water into their systems is through the juices in the vegetables which they eat. For this reason the watermelons were a great delicacy and the greedy little hermits did all in their power to unconsciously destroy as many melons as possible. The pumpkins shared the same fate and bits of cucumbers were found scattered upon the ground where these selfish, energetic little brutes had cut them into small pieces to place them in their cheek-pockets that they might be carried away to their store-houses.

The pioneer gopher of the hillside had now grown old and gray. His teeth were not as strong nor as sharp as they used to be. His little eyes, that never were very good, left him almost totally blind in his old days. Still age and experience, with his natural instinct, helped him to keep out of the reach of his enemies and the farmer's traps that were destroying so many of his kind. The ground made loose by the farmer's plough was easy to dig and he found many luxuries which he had never tasted before.

The feeble old gopher, perhaps through force of habit, or because he was old and could not

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accustom himself to the new surroundings and the ways of the younger of his kind, remained on his long occupied claim on the border of the field. Many a time he had thrown up the dirt while mining his winding halls and had covered up the vegetation over a goodly part of his domain. Often in the fall, as the hot prairie fires swept by, mercilessly licking up everything along their way, the only vegetation left to enrich the soil was that covered by the hermit miner. As new vegetation sprung from that which was buried the faithful little fellow mined it all over again; and thus he toiled year after year. In this way and by his greedy nature of storing away all he could not eat, much vegetation was converted into fertilizing substances and the soil was made into the productive condition in which the frontiersman had found it.

The following spring the farmer broke up the strip of prairie upon which the old gopher had made his home and in nature's way had ploughed and reploughed the soil so many times. Thus the feeble old gopher was turned out of his life-long home by the cold share of the farmer's plough in return for the faithful

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and valuable service he had rendered. The animal who had never shown mercy or had sympathy for others received none at last for himself!

The farmer's plough had unearthed a gopher's nest containing two little ones about a week old. They were perfectly helpless. Their eyes and ears were tightly closed and they lay on a small round bed of soft grass and vegetable fibres. They were pretty little things of a translucent, pinkish-white color. Their heads were round and their little fat front paws and fingers gave them somewhat the appearance of a little human baby. The farmer undertook to raise them, but they were too young and the effort failed. The young attain their full growth by fall and are then perfectly accomplished in the art of gopher mining.

The farmer maintained a constant war with his four-footed miner neighbors, but they held their own for a long while. They ate his potatoes and other tuberous vegetables and ruthlessly helped themselves annually to his watermelons. But the most unbearable and disappointing damage they did was to completely gnaw off the roots of the apple, cherry and peach trees he had set out and whose growth

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he was watching with pleasure and pride. An orchard was a luxury at that time not known on the western plains. He noticed the trees were drooping but did not guess the true cause until a heavy wind had laid them all flat on the ground. From that time he worked with a vengeance to destroy the lives of the once harmless and useful little animals.

There is an old Indian legend concerning the gophers that runs as follows: "Bright-Moon was an old Indian medicine-man. He tramped the prairie over in search of herbs and roots to use in those great remedies that drove the evil spirits of disease from his chosen people. Long he had hunted for some roots that were highly prized by his ancestors. At last when he was gray, wrinkled and bent with age he found the long sought roots on a hillside where two gophers had their home. The gophers had beautiful, large bright eyes and lived much in the sunshine. The roots so highly prized by Bright-Moon the gophers seemed to delight in destroying. Those they could not eat they cut up and stored away. Bright-Moon remonstrated with them. He told them the roots

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were sacred medicine given by the Great Spirit, the Sun; but the gophers were selfish and jealous of Red-face, as they called the good, wise, aged Bright-Moon. They said, 'the roots grow around our home and not yours, Red-face, and we will do as we please with them.' Bright-Moon left with a sad heart. When the sun was long hidden behind the great hills in the west the two gophers called all their kind together and destroyed all the roots they could find. When Bright-Moon returned and found what the selfish gophers had done he was very angry. When the gophers saw his great anger they trembled and showed their teeth and bit at the ones who had tempted them to commit this destruction. Then Bright-Moon rose before them and called to the Great Spirit, the Sun, to revenge his wrong. The sun poured out great streaks of fire that dazzled the eyes of the gophers and made them grow weak and small. Then he commanded them to seek the ground and live in solitude and darkness. From that day on the gophers have been solitary, vicious underground dwellers, shunning light and companionship."

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## FIELD MICE

**A**MONG the most pleasant and helpful memories of my childhood are the thoughts gained from association with a dear, little eastern lady. She was a distant relative of my mother. During a tour of the great west, fortunately for me, she spent a summer and fall at our humble plains home. When a young woman she had not been what is commonly regarded as good-looking; but as time passed such was the love and harmony of her life that she came to be a very beautiful old lady. And most marked of all she had that greater, more potent beauty of character. It was during the later years of her life that she made us the memorable visit and by her sweet influence, of which I was at that time quite unconscious, rolled into my life some of the foundation-stones of unde-

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veloped thought that have since aided me to surmount many a difficulty and to pass safely over many a rough place in the path of my own life's experience. "Aunt," as I was accustomed to address our noble guest, entered into all my childish pleasures and at once seemed to love and to understand my animal pets quite as well as I did myself.

One fall evening, just at sunset's hour, we were walking through a meadow with Mongola, my pet skunk trotting along between us or running along in the lead in his dainty mincing way, his beautiful pompon-like tail gracefully sweeping the ground. Occasionally he would stop and with his tail held high above his back walk up to me, then stand on his hind legs and scratch at the hem of my skirt and look at me with the most pleading expression possible in his little black eyes. This was his way of saying "I am tired and I want you to carry me!" I would take him up and place him on my shoulder where he would proudly sit while I carried him safely over the rough places or through the tall grass. The very human ways of my pet pleased and amused Aunt very



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greatly. Whenever we came to a place where the grass was very fine and thick we sauntered along more slowly. These were the favored places of nature, the green spots that offered protection to small beast and smaller bird and which, also, gave nourishment to their larger vegetarian neighbors. Aunt told me of the economic laws of nature, those wonderful laws which govern and aid growth. It all seemed so great and so beautiful! I felt very much more than my young mind was able to define; in a certain way only did I comprehend. While we walked the grass became wet with dew; and even in this my elderly companion saw a lesson. She told me that the dew was bathing the myriads of parched lips of the grass blades, that the plants had been losing moisture in the intense heat of the sun's rays during the day, and that, though this was so, the plants had been borrowing from mother earth the substances which she deftly, by some secret chemistry, wove into wonderful living structures which her vegetarian dependents needed for their development. "Each of nature's great gifts entwine with each other," she said. "Each lends to the other and often

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during the process lose entirely their own identity. In this way the dead and inert become alive. Atoms travel from lifeless to living bodies and back again to lifeless forms; and so they give and borrow; are alive or are dead, just as the wonderful processes of nature seem to demand." Aunt tried to make me understand that there was a life lesson here. "If the great leaders of affairs," she said, "would only live nearer to the powerful and simple laws of nature and thus work together for the common good of all instead of individual fame and gain how much more rapidly and smoothly would all the difficult problems of our national life evolve." "

Mongola not understanding or being able to enjoy any of the wonderful thoughts Aunt was unfolding to me did his part, however, by living his own life and following his natural instincts. While we were using our minds my pet had been using his sharp little eyes and his well developed sense of smell. The grass moved so slightly we did not notice it but the skunk did and understood what it meant. He aroused me from this train of thought as his

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sharp claws scratched my arm when he endeavored to noiselessly climb down from my shoulder. On reaching the ground, which he did in a half tumble, he put his pointed nose to the surface and sniffed about in an interested manner. I knew he had scented some other animal. As he ran along he pushed the grass aside showing many tiny, well trodden paths crossing and recrossing one another until they formed a net-work of avenues and tiny streets, shaded by the grass and the brown arches of the overhanging plants that had been left by the sharp teeth of the interesting little road-makers. Aunt told me they were the runways of a family of field mice. Presently Mongola stopped and began to dig into the ground. He had discovered the entrance to one of the tunnels and it led to the underground home and storehouses of the dainty little creatures. The skunk with his long claws laid open first one tunnel and then another for there were quite as many tunnels and entrances as there were streets and avenues in their surface system of engineering. They were, however, somewhat more complicated and the entrance to the nest and



*"Aunt told me they were the run-  
ways of a family of field-mice"*



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store-room is always closed when the wise little owner travels abroad. During all the work of destruction on the part of Mongola nothing was seen of the owners of this mysterious, winding, underground mansion. We had about concluded that the home had been deserted when our little companion dug into a chamber larger than the others and disclosed something new. In the center lay a round ball of soft grass. In an instant the skunk had sprung forward and seized it in his mouth. As he did so the tiniest little gray thing sprang from the meshes of the ball and dashed off through the grass. Mongola dropped the nest and in one leap caught the dainty little mother-mouse between his paws and then savagely tore it to pieces with his sharp teeth before our astonished eyes. It was done so quickly that had we been alive to the situation and tried to save the tiny thing it would have been impossible. The little life had been sacrificed to the needs of another animal, stronger and its natural enemy. Before we realized what the skunk was about he had again taken possession of the grass nest and had torn it apart. Out rolled six little balls of fur

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scarcely as large as a thimble. They were quickly swallowed by the greedy Mongola. Not yet content he sniffed about for some time but at last gave up further search. In a most satisfied manner he sat up, wiped his mouth with his paws for a napkin and finally washed them with his tongue, arranged the fur about his face to complete satisfaction, walked over to me with his tail held up in a proud manner and gave several little grunts. Whether he was seeking praise, I know not, but it was censure that he received. Aunt said I should not be grieved nor scold my pet for it was natural and right that he should feed upon mice. If they are not kept in check by their natural enemies they so increase that they do great damage to crops and to young orchards.

The wise little field mice seem to be fully aware of their constant danger from many enemies. They seldom come out in the open and usually lie concealed in their underground homes until twilight. Then they venture out for food or to make a friendly visit to a neighbor. These trips are all taken with the greatest precaution, for not only do their modest

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gray coats serve to hide their movements in the somber shades of night but they closely resemble the dead and dried vegetation about them. Then, too, their runways are concealed beneath grass, leaves, fallen trees or logs. With them it is one continual problem of concealment and this environment and instinct both help to secure.

Notwithstanding all this care and the aid nature has given in protective coloration and habits of concealment they often do not avail. Many a hungry mink, or weasel, or badger, or skunk, or snake, besides a number of birds of prey, like hawks and owls, daily destroy large numbers of these timid little animals. While Aunt was telling me of their interesting ways and of their big, hungry enemies my sympathy was aroused for the little hunted things. How I longed to be able to protect them from all their enemies. They seemed so delicate and harmless! As I stood looking at the many little runways I pictured them, in my childish fancy, as peopled with tiny, gray living objects, that went about unmolested and without fear, that lived and moved in perfect freedom and so were happy.



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“For,” thought I, “if happiness and freedom cannot be found in nature it certainly cannot exist.” But my desire to protect and help the little vagabonds, as I afterward learned them to be, was but a foolish impulse of a tender, sympathetic, child mind. But, after all, it was far more noble and quite as sensible as the impulse which the man of matured mind follows too often in destroying ruthlessly and mercilessly his furred and feathered friends. The history of the buffalo, the big-horn, the antelope, the otter and the prairie-hen show well the short-sighted selfishness of the man who thus interferes with nature’s ways ; he is rapidly destroying the makers of all four-footed trails !

Field mice breed at short intervals during the entire year, each litter having from four to eight young. From this fact their numbers increase very rapidly. Their food is mainly vegetable, though they destroy many insects and small mollusks, and with plants they act as laboratories converting the vegetable into the animal — nature’s way of supplying many carnivorous dependents with food. Nevertheless, though this is their destiny, they still seem to maintain a footing

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in the balance of animal life. They are of no direct use to man and so, in his ignorance of nature's laws, through which he has time and again decimated the useful of the animal world, many of which consume these small rodents as food, they have been more than able to hold their own in the great struggle for existence. Some of them take only a small fee for valuable services ; the grain they destroy is by no means an equivalent for the insects they exterminate. But like selfish little thoughts and acts, quietly multiplied, the seemingly harmless mice may do great injury. Each took, to be sure, but a tiny mouthful of grain, or a kernel or two of corn, or nibbled off but a few spears of wheat or timothy at a time, but they came often and there were many of them. So in the end they made their presence and power felt. They soon laid waste the entire field. The foolish farmer, with all his skill and his traps and his poisons, could not replace nature's check. Aunt declared that "if we allow thoughts of spite and of revenge to creep into our minds and influence our lives ever so little we interfere with nature's most powerful laws of love and har-

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mony." Like the work of the little mice in the field these thoughts will soon destroy all the grandeur and power and beauty of life. And she was right!

While Aunt was talking we examined the destroyed nest and found it to be most interesting and beautiful. It was an architectural wonder, in view of its origin. It was composed of fine grasses so interwoven as to form a hollow globe. The walls were thin and elastic and lined inside with plant down and soft fibers. How long and patiently the little mother and her mate must have toiled to weave the soft cozy nest and to dig those wondrously intricate galleries! And what of their end? To be torn to pieces by a huge, unappreciative enemy! Aye! More! To surrender a life! Truly, the philosophy of nature is a harsh one, from some standpoints. We now carefully opened many of the remaining galleries and found several chambers or rooms in which were stored away little piles of carefully selected wheat kernels gathered from the neighboring wheat-field. A single chamber was filled with sun-flower seeds, a part of the winter's store which the

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provident little creatures were laying away. Altogether the wise, little, energetic miners had several quarts of food put aside for future use.

Then began our walk home, which was not without its instructive incidents. Nearer the wheat-field, where food was most abundant, the runways were very numerous and in them were many of the little mice homes. An accident felled me to the ground and there, right in front of me was still another lesson. A deserted bird's nest was occupied by a family of little mice all of whom scampered out when I so unwittingly disturbed them. These little creatures are very cleanly and frequently make new nests to replace those that are imperfect, or old, or get very dirty.

A short time after this pleasant and instructive walk I caught a pair of little gray mice in a trap which I placed at the base of a stack of wheat. There are a number of kinds of field or meadow mice and they vary in color from gray to a rich chestnut brown, while the fur of some is sprinkled with black hairs that are longer and coarser. The field mice which I knew on the plains are not as large nor as plen-

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tiful as many others of their relatives that live throughout the fields and prairies of North America.

The captured mice I placed in a box made especially for them, the bottom being lined with tin and the sides and top made of wire netting. They were given a plentiful supply of dirt, a few pieces of bark and a small bunch of grass and leaves. They turned out to be very active creatures, seldom being quiet except when eating, or sitting up washing their faces or hands, or when asleep. Many of these delicate little animals die from fright when in captivity. But the two dainty little ones whom fate decreed should walk into my trap were of a more practical frame of mind. They at once explored every portion of the inclosure running up the sides, or along the top, grasping the meshes with their delicate, slender, pink toes. Then they darted down and scampered under the grass and leaves that formed a mass in one corner of the box. The male was a trifle larger than his mate and his black whiskers were longer. He seemed to move in such a serious way and to direct the mouse-doings of their new home;

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at any rate it so seemed to Aunt and I, wherefore we named him "Deacon," and his little mate, because of her soft gray garb, we called "Quaker." Both were very cunning little objects, their bodies being scarcely two and a half inches in length and their tails were nearly as long as their bodies. Their heads were large, with tiny bead-like, black eyes, little rounded ears and graceful black whiskers. The under parts were shaded into a pinkish white and their dainty little feet were pink on the under side.

Most of my leisure moments for some time after these dear little pets came into my possession were spent in an endeavor to get acquainted with their mysterious and cunning habits. I often aroused them from their midday nap in my eagerness to learn whether they were still alive and all right. Deacon and Quaker soon grew accustomed to their new home. They finally set to work and began tearing the grass and leaves into fine strips; then they wove them into a rounded, somewhat compressed form, with an open space in the center and with two small openings to the outside. In this soft and wonderfully constructed bed they would while away

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The mice had mined and remined the earth of their home time and time again. They seemed at last to be satisfied with their underground dwelling. The grain and corn which had been placed in their cage was carried in their cheeks to their storehouses. They now turned their energetic little minds to tearing apart the first-made nest and proceeded to reconstruct it. This they did in a large underground chamber which they had excavated for that purpose. A few feathers and a tuft of wool which I had placed in the cage were the only novel additions to the materials employed. The real character of this nest became apparent later. I had not seen Quaker for several days. I feared she was dead or ill and opened the tunnel to learn her fate. I found the new made nest and in it were four tiny pink forms, not much larger than a lima bean. I never knew Quaker to be other than timid and retiring and her demeanor to be gentle. But how changed! Now she was a veritable little savage. The mother-spirit had been kindled within her breast and she was a perfect little demon in the defense of her helpless family. The tunnel which child-

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ish curiosity had prompted me to damage was quickly repaired by the proud, energetic possessors of the four little pink balls. And those little mice! In a surprisingly brief time the little eyes opened and the pink bodies became covered with soft gray coats like those of their parents. They came forth into their small world, bounded on all sides with wire. But they never knew the limitations of their home, having never known any other. They ran about chasing their tails, or one another, and seemed as happy as though whole fields of wheat were their playground and home. It was better for them here because they were free from strife and free from dangers that make the struggle for existence so hard for wild animals. But who can tell that there was not an inborn longing for independence and freedom? Who can say that freedom from cares leads to better appreciation of opportunities or pleasures? Certain it was my little mice never encountered enemies and so never knew the joys and excitement of escaping.

As time wore on all went well in the mouse-home. The newcomers all seemed good-na-



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tured and lovable with each other. They kept up a constant chatter with each other and only once in a while, for a minute or two, would seem in a disagreeable frame of mind when more than one wished the same choice morsel of food. They learned to eat from my hand, would run up my sleeve and dart back again at any sight or sound. When fall came and had nearly gone the cage with its contents was moved from the granary to the house; an injury to the netting imposed the necessity for repairing it with a piece of canvas. My mice were now warm and comfortable in their new quarters. Their cousins in the fields were quite as safe beneath the friendly snow which shielded them both from their enemies and from the cold wintry blasts. Beneath the snow they now tunneled. Many were the little snowy paths that crossed and recrossed in all directions made by the sociable little mice as they ran about making calls upon their neighbors or returning visits made them. But now they did damage as well. Should a young orchard or a nursery chance to be near these snowy runways the roots offered choice meals to the mice. The roots of trees

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and trunks of bushes and shrubs were robbed of their bark ; in the spring when the sap flows the trees bleed and soon die.

One night as I was about to retire I heard a peculiar little squeak and rushed at once to the mouse-cage. The mice were nowhere to be seen. I shook the cage which had always brought them from their burrows, but they did not appear. Then I noticed that the canvas which I had used to patch the broken wire was eaten away and at last my pets had found freedom. I looked about the room for them and as I did so saw a sight that shocked me. The family cat was busy munching something. There was a little blood-stain on the floor and a small gray tail still protruded from her mouth. Was it Deacon, or Quaker, or both? The only answer the cat gave to my query was to finish the tail and walk away with a satisfied mew. For the time being I knew not whether both or but one of my little mice had contributed to her repast.

A few days passed after this tragedy when, one night, I was awakened by hearing a sweet little shrill song, not unlike that of a miniature

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canary. I listened for a long time and then arose and lit a light to search for the stranger, the hidden songster. The song ceased when I began to move about and I had my trouble for my reward. Night after night I was serenaded by this mysterious nocturnal musician. The whole family heard it and joined me in the search for its source. All our attempts to solve the mystery of the peculiar sweet strain were futile until one evening I went to take my hat from a closet shelf when I heard the same shrill little song. Before my eyes sat dear little Quaker! Her little throat was actually pouring forth the sweet refrain. I called out in my surprise and then she turned and fled. She had made a nest in my rather expensive hat, the first one I had ever possessed to which I could attach much value. But Quaker had demonstrated herself a singer. Whether she sang through grief at the loss of her mate, or with joy at being freed from matrimonial bonds, or through happiness for freedom, I cannot say. She was recaptured after a time but while I had her she never sang again. I have never been able to determine whether she lost her power of song through loss of liberty,

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or because she was lonely, or for some physiological reason; it is only certain that she lost it.

One morning I found Quaker stiff and cold in death. I remembered how she had damaged my hat and this may have chilled my love for her so greatly that I did not mourn for her as perhaps I might. She had come into my life with little ways and given me some little insight into the value of small things useful and the need to rid ourselves of small things harmful.



## ELLA AND THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN GRASSHOPPERS

ONE could see for miles and miles over the level prairie covered with bunches of buffalo-grass, clumps of sage-brush and a bunch of cactus here and there, with not a tree or a house in sight. These were the lonely surroundings of a little girl who lived with her parents on a farm on the plains of South Dakota.

Ella, for that was the name of this little western girl, lived contented and happy in their sod house and thought it a very nice home; it was the only one she had ever known. She had no brothers or sisters; her only companions, besides her mother and teacher, were the birds, the mammals and the insects which she found living around her.

Ella was naturally a thoughtful and studious

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child. Being an only child she gradually grew into the habit of listening to the conversation of her elders and sharing the cares, hardships and disappointments that went to make up the life of the frontier farmer as he battled against grasshoppers, drouth, hot winds and blizzards, in what so often seemed a vain effort to eke out a living and secure a home.

The corn which her father had planted in the spring had grown higher than her head. Ella spent many pleasant hours wandering through this cool, shady field, gathering the silk from the newly forming ears of corn to braid and pin on the head of her rag-doll for hair, or watching the little beetles that chanced to be feeding on the juicy leaves of the corn-stalks, or the useful little "lady-bird" with her modest-colored calico gown eating the destructive aphids; while the timid little field-mouse with his soft gray fur darted noiselessly behind a corn-stalk or under a fallen leaf as she approached. Sometimes her bolder friend, the striped ground-squirrel, alarmed by the soft patter of her little bare feet, would run right in front of her, or even across her toes, such was

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his haste to reach his underground home on the edge of the fields.

The golden grain in the adjoining wheat-field sheltered her from the burning sun as she sat and watched the ground-squirrels catch the little brown grasshoppers, so near the color of the ground that she could hardly see them unless they hopped; but the ground-squirrels with their sharp, bead-like eyes never missed one. At other times they would play their funny little game of tag, then dart into their holes in the ground, or come near to her for the corn she generally carried in the pocket of her gingham apron with which to feed them.

One day one of the little squirrels ran across her lap and put his nose in her pocket and ate some of the corn, then filled the fold on each side of his cheeks with the yellow kernels to store away in his home for the cold winter months when there would be no grasshoppers or other good things he could find to eat.

This confidence from her four-footed neighbors pleased Ella very much, but she never moved, or even laughed, for fear they would all scamper away, as they had done many times



*"The golden grain on the adjoining wheat-fields sheltered her from the burning sun as she sat and watched the ground-squirrels"*



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when the lonely little girl, without a playmate or child companion, had moved about and tried to have them play with her and her doll.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon of one of the last days in July. Ella was sitting on the ground in the shade of the corn-stalks watching a pair of catbirds feeding grasshoppers to their young. They had built a nest in a plum-thicket near by. Each of the birds by turn took a fat grasshopper in its stout beak and beat it against the ground until it became a soft mass, then flew to the edge of the nest and dropped it into the wide open mouth of one of their little ones. In this way, in company with the robins, meadowlarks and other birds of the plains, they destroy large numbers of grasshoppers each day.

A gray cloud seemed to pass between the sun and earth; the father catbird, thinking the sunset hour was approaching, perched on a twig near the nest and began to sing one of his sweet mimic songs. Ella's father and two of his neighbors were cutting the golden wheat when they, too, noticed the approaching gloom. It grew darker and darker. Ella became frightened

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and ran to the house to tell her mother of the storm-cloud, leaving her sunbonnet and much loved rag-doll in her hurry and fear. Her mother with a troubled face explained to Ella that it was not a wind or rain cloud, but many millions of Rocky Mountain grasshoppers in search of food. The little girl looked at them through a piece of smoked glass her mother gave her. Her mother told Ella that the grasshoppers had come from the states of Idaho and Montana and were traveling toward the South and East. They kept moving with the wind in one steady stream for almost an hour. It seemed that the great army of flying insects never would come to an end.

Ella's parents watched this moving mass with much fear, for they knew that the least change of wind or temperature would bring the entire horde to the ground and in a few hours there would not be so much as a blade of grass left. The child and her parents well remembered the year before in the early part of August. At night when they went to bed the ripe wheat bent toward the ground with its own weight. The corn-stalks were tall and heavy laden with

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long ears of sweet, milky corn and the grass in the little valley near the creek was still green and tender. In the morning when they awoke all was changed; not a spear of wheat was left, only the yellow straw remained. The corn-stalks had been stripped of their long, green leaves and the kernels and husks were either wholly or almost eaten from the cobs. Not a blade of grass was to be seen on their farm or upon that of their neighbor. Myriads of the grasshoppers that were flying over, not liking the sudden change in the temperature that comes as a rule when the sun goes down on the plains, alighted for the night and devoured all they found that could be eaten by them. When the sun rose and the temperature changed, the wind being in the right direction to carry them on their regular course, they began to rise; first a few, then still more and more, until the greater part of the many millions was again on its destructive journey towards the south as far as Texas. So you can understand with what excited interest and fear Ella looked through her piece of smoked glass at the thousands upon thousands of wandering

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grasshoppers that had straggled on behind the main body and were alighting faster and faster, it seemed to her, into her father's fields and even invading her own little garden that she had spent so many hours in hoeing and weeding. They fell so thick under the wide leather belt of the harvester that Ella's father could not cut any more of his grain, but stood helpless with his neighbors watching the greedy insects destroy most of his year's work. Ella feared there would be no corn or grain to feed the horses, cattle and pigs when the cold winter should come. And her dear little lambs that were growing to be big woolly sheep; she could never see them starve! No never! She was sure she could have no new dress or warm coat for winter, and it had been three years since she had had a new winter dress or coat. It was all too much, and the poor little western girl cried herself to sleep.

The great horde of grasshoppers staid on the ground the remainder of that day and night. The following morning as soon as the hot sun dried away the heavy dew of the previous night the grasshoppers began to rise, much to the re-

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lief of the discouraged farmers. Ella and her parents stood at the door of their sod house looking and talking of their almost completely ruined fields. With sad hearts they thought of all the comforts they had hoped and planned for but twenty-four hours previously, and how, without thought or warning, a destructive enemy, as it were, had dropped before them from a clear sky. The sad expression on their faces changed as they noticed first but a few of the grasshoppers rise into the air, circle around several times, then slowly ascend facing the wind. Then a larger number followed and still larger numbers until the greater part of the destructive army was again on the wing; they rose so high that they appeared to the naked eye like mere specks against the blue sky; they still continued to rise until lost to view. Thus they moved on, carried by the wind, only to alight in new fields and blast the hopes of other unfortunate farmers, perhaps many miles away. These wandering armies have been known to fly as far as two hundred miles before alighting for rest and food.

After the flying robbers had disappeared Ella

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missed her doll and sunbonnet. She looked everywhere and at last she remembered she had left them on the ground where they lay beside her when she first noticed those dreadful grasshoppers. She went to look and found them. The grasshoppers had eaten many fine holes in the covering of the head of her rag-doll; the penciled eyes and mouth that her mother had taken so much pains to mark and that Ella loved so well were all eaten away. The pretty pink dress her doll wore, made from pieces left from her best Sunday gown and trimmed with the first lace she had ever made, was covered with holes eaten by the destructive grasshoppers and faded to a dirty white by the heavy dew of the night before and the hot sun of the morning. Her sunbonnet also was ruined. Gathering up the hem of her dress Ella tenderly placed her ruined doll and bonnet in it and carried them to her mother, who was her only confidant and true companion.

Ella's mother promised to make her a new doll and bonnet, so she ran out to listen to the meadow-lark singing his morning song and being answered by his mate. In the sweet song

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of this beautiful lark all was forgotten and Ella was again her own happy self.

Ella's teacher was interested in the study of nature, especially the insects, and spent much of her spare time collecting them, learning their ways and the benefit or injury they do to man. Ella generally accompanied her and shared these studies and observations as best she could with her young but rapidly developing mind. Naturally at this discouraging time much of their interest was centered upon the study of the dreaded grasshoppers that for several years had laid waste all vegetation, often depriving the inhabitants of the bare necessities of life.

One day in the latter part of August, Ella and her teacher noticed a number of female grasshoppers pushing the horny plates at the lower end of their abdomen into the ground. Upon examination they found the insects had deposited in these openings a number of eggs fastened together with a sort of cement into a cylinder-shaped mass. When this was completed they covered the spot so no one who had not witnessed the operation would suspect that the eggs were there. The favorite locali-



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ties these traveling plunderers select in which to lay their eggs are in low places upon the loose sandy soil. These eggs contain the undeveloped lives of countless millions of insects with the power of crushing the farmers' hopes and depriving them of their natural rights, the products of the soil they till. By the close of the following month the grasshoppers had finished their life history and those of them that had escaped their many enemies died either from mere exhaustion or the unfriendly frost. Many of their lifeless bodies were found and eagerly picked up by the few birds that remained and the little mammals in the neighborhood.

The following spring, during the month of May, on a bright, warm morning, Ella noticed the ground was covered with little red hoppers and more seemed to be pushing their way up through the ground everywhere. They were queer little things, with four short legs and two great long hind legs and very large oblong eyes and a pair of horns, properly known as antennæ, growing out from the front of the head between the eyes. In color they resembled the reddish soil from whence they came.

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They were very hungry and ate the grass and other vegetation, clearing the ground in a very short time of every living plant.

In a few days they had eaten so much and grown so fat that they were obliged to cast off their old skins and enter upon their second stage of growth. Their color was now of a yellowish gray, mottled with black; and tiny wing-pads began to grow. In a short time Ella and her teacher noticed these queer little insects had again grown out of the fit and color of their dress and were changing it once more, this time for a mottled green, with the wing-pads considerably larger. Twice after this they were seen casting off the old dress for a new one; the color remained about the same, but each time the wing-pads were larger and more prominent. Now the insects were full grown and became very restless and discontented, for underneath the wing-pads were folded away their power to travel over the plains to new fields and scenes. In a short time the desire grew so strong that they ceased to eat and crawled up the side of posts, heavy grass, weed-stalks, or, in fact, any firm object. The one which Ella and her

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teacher watched crawled slowly up the side of a board on the corner of the granary. When the "hopper" was several feet from the ground it clutched the wood firmly with the claws of its hind feet which were drawn up under its body. Thus it hung head down, with its long antennæ drawn over its face, motionless as though dead. In a short time, the body between the wing-pads began to swell. Presently, the skin split open down the back, from the middle of the head to the base of the abdomen. "It's not dead; it's moving," whispered Ella, as the insect began to swell about the head and upper part of the body. By a number of muscular contractions the new head was slowly pushed from the old skin. Now the animal began by hard labor to push the old skin, with its empty eyes, back beneath the body; next, it slowly drew forth the new feelers and front legs from their old casings; then, by other seemingly difficult efforts, the new wings that had been so carefully folded and protected while growing, were pulled out. They had been developing from the very moment Ella saw the funny little red "hopper" push its head out of the ground

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until now, its last helpless struggle before receiving its crowning glory — two pairs of wings. The newly freed soft front legs rapidly stiffened as it clutched the board on which it hung for support and presently, with what strength remained, the animal drew out the long hind legs and end of the abdomen. As soon as this was completed, the weak, wet insect turned round and crawled up the side of its lately cast-off skin. Here it rested, unfolded and became strong. First, the crooked legs straightened; then the front wings unfolded and the hind wings straightened out; in a few minutes more both pairs of wings were all unfolded and hung down limp and moist. As the warm sun dried them the broad hind wings folded up like fans beneath the narrow front ones, which served in the same way as the end sticks of a lady's fan. Thus they assumed their normal position. During the above described struggle for a new existence the insect has been gradually changing in color to fresh, bright browns and black on the body, with added red and yellow on the wings. All this wonderful change Ella watched with much pleasure and interest. It took less

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than three quarters of an hour. During this interesting object-lesson Ella learned through her teacher that if our minds are rightly trained we can be benefited and learn new and valuable lessons even through our seeming enemies.

For several years Ella's father and his neighbors were kept poor by the partial destruction of their crops by the grasshoppers, but this year both drouth and hot winds were added, laying waste all vegetation for miles around. The farmers were left destitute and were obliged to call upon relatives and friends in the East for both food and clothing.

Ella's father secured work in a distant county where the farmers were less unfortunate, leaving Ella and her mother alone on their farm. They were expecting a letter from him by that day's stage. Ella, with her sunbonnet drawn over her face to shield it from the burning sun, sat by the roadside and listened for the rattling noise of the welcome old stage-coach. As it drew near she rose to meet the driver and take the mail-sack; for their house served as the mail distributing point for the widely scattered neighbors.

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The stage carried but a single passenger, a wealthy old bachelor from the East, who had come west to look after his mortgages and land-interests. When the stage stopped the old man climbed out to stretch his legs and shake the dust of travel from his clothing, while the driver fed and watered his horses. He looked at the little girl as she curiously stared at him from under her sunbonnet, with her large gray eyes and little pinched and hungry face.

In a short time the kind face and friendly manner of the old man won Ella's confidence and before she really knew what she was saying he had learned all about her home and her own life—how very hungry she was and that her mother had used the last portion of corn-meal for their breakfast, which was the only article of food they had tasted for some days, and that there was no fuel with which to cook anything, not even cow-chips, as the droppings from the cattle are called, which often made up the bulk of fuel during these years of privation for the plains farmer. She had secretly hoped that her father would be able to send a box of good things to eat by that day's stage, but the driver

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had assured her that there was none and the little girl began to fear there might not even be a letter for them in the mail-sack. The old man's eyes grew moist as he listened. He went back to the stage for his lunch-basket and gave it to Ella. When she pushed back her bonnet to eat one of the sandwiches the old man saw a resemblance in the face of the child that took him back many years. He asked the little girl her name and if her mother came from New York City. When he had learned all the facts which the child had repeatedly heard her parents talk over concerning their early life and home, the old man clasped her in his arms and whispered in a husky voice, "The same! the same!" Then holding her at arm's length, he said, "Dear little girl! you are the very picture of your mother when she was your age. I am her eldest brother, your Uncle John. There was a difference of opinion when your mother married your father. They went west." The old man was thinking aloud as the little girl held on to his big hand as she trotted by his side on their way to the house. As they entered the home the little girl led the

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old man to her mother saying, "Our prayer for help is answered! Here is our own Uncle John."













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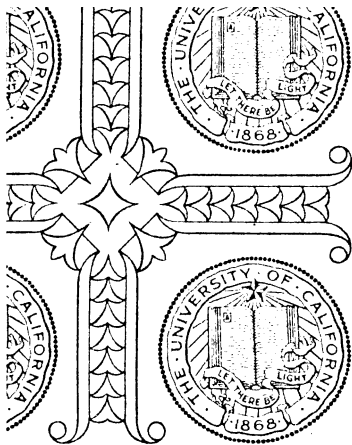
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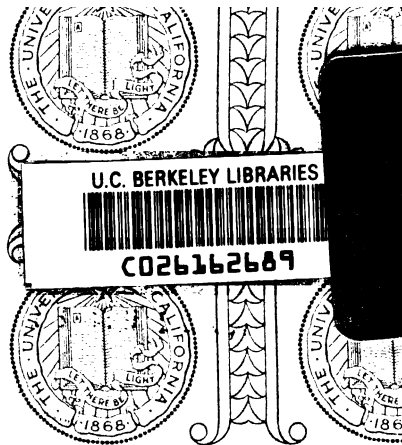
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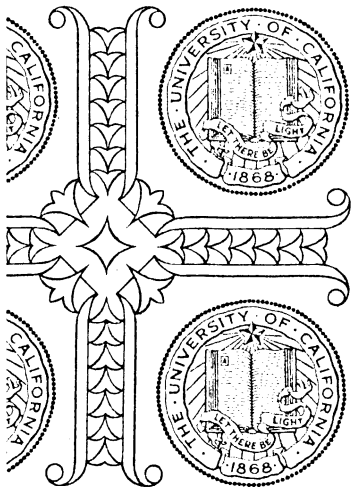


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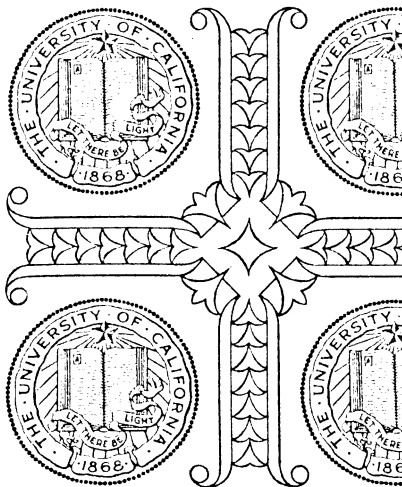
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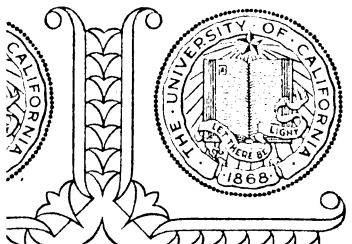


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